United Nations E/ICEF/1999/8

# Economic and Social Council

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**United Nations Children's Fund**
Executive Board
**Annual session 1999**
7–11 June 1999
Item 2

*For Action*

## Provisional annotated agenda and organization of work

### For the 1999 annual session of the Executive Board to be held at United Nations Headquarters from 7 to 11 June 1999

*Summary*

The present document contains the provisional annotated agenda for the 1999 annual session of the Executive Board. The annex contains the proposed timetable and organization of work for the session.

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## Provisional agenda

**Item 1:** Opening of the session: statements by the President of the Executive Board and the Executive Director

**Item 2:** Adoption of the provisional agenda and timetable and organization of work

**Item 3:** Report of the Executive Director (Part II)

**Item 4:** Positioning UNICEF to meet the needs of children and women in the twenty-first century

(a) Presentations by guest speakers and dialogue with Executive Board members

(b) Discussion of the following reports: "The future global agenda for children — imperatives for the twenty-first century"; "Progress report on follow-up to the World Summit for Children"; and "Programme cooperation for children and women from a human rights perspective"

**Item 5:** Ensuring children's rights in Africa

**Item 6:** Progress, challenges and future strategies in basic education

**Item 7:** Progress report on the UNICEF strategy and investments in information technology

**Item 8:** Progress report on mainstreaming gender in UNICEF

**Item 9:** Oral report on implementation of the health strategy for UNICEF

**Item 10:** Reports on field visits of Executive Board members

**Item 11:** Other matters

**Item 12:** Closing of the session: remarks by the Executive Director and the President of the Executive Board

## Annotated provisional agenda

**1. Opening of the session: statements by the President of the Executive Board and the Executive Director**

Introductory statements will be made by the President and the Executive Director.

**2. Adoption of the provisional agenda and timetable and organization of work**

[*For action*]

The provisional agenda has been structured in accordance with relevant Executive Board decisions, in particular the 1999 programme of work (E/ICEF/1998/16 and Corr.1) adopted by the Board at its second regular session in September 1998 (E/ICEF/1998/6/Rev.1, decision 1998/19). The proposed timetable and organization of work, which was shared with the Bureau on 24 March 1999, is contained in the annex.

Decisions will be adopted as the discussion of each agenda item is concluded. However, if required, time will be set aside for Board members to consult informally on all outstanding draft decisions.

**3. Report of the Executive Director (Part II)**

[*For information – E/ICEF/1999/4 (Part II)*]

This report is prepared in the context of Executive Board decision 1999/7 (E/ICEF/1999/7 (Part I)), adopted at the first regular session of 1999. It reports on progress and achievements made during 1998 against the Board-approved medium-term plan (E/ICEF/1998/13 and Corr.1 and decision 1998/22).

**4. Positioning UNICEF to meet the needs of children and women in the twenty-first century**

This will be the first in a series of discussions by the Executive Board on how to position UNICEF to meet the needs of children and women in the next century, culminating with an Executive Board decision on future directions at the annual session in 2000.

(a) Three eminent speakers will introduce some key considerations which need to frame the discussion about the future direction of UNICEF:

(i) Dr. Savitri Goonesekere, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka, will discuss why the principles of human rights need to serve as the guiding framework for human development;

(ii) Mr. Ricardo Moran, Inter-American Development Bank, will speak on early childhood care and its importance for development;

(iii) Dr. Lincoln Chen, The Rockefeller Foundation, will reflect on the future agenda for human development and children.

(b) The following documents are recommended as background reading to the discussion:

(i) "The future global agenda for children — imperatives for the twenty-first century" (E/ICEF/1999/10);

(ii) "Progress report on follow-up to the World Summit for Children" (E/ICEF/1999/9);

(iii) "Programme cooperation for children and women from a human rights perspective" (E/ICEF/1999/11).

The Board may also wish to comment on the above reports and provide guidance to the secretariat as necessary.

**5. Ensuring children's rights in Africa**

[*For information – E/ICEF/1999/12*]

As requested by the Executive Board, this report reviews progress made in the implementation of decision 1997/19 (E/ICEF/1997/12/Rev.1), adopted at its 1997 annual session, on ensuring children's rights to survival, development and protection in Africa. It also responds to a request for specific information on how the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for Africa is being implemented in the field. The Board may wish to comment on the report and provide guidance to the secretariat, as necessary.

**6. Progress, challenges and future strategies in basic education**

[*For action – E/ICEF/1999/14*]

The Executive Board last reviewed a report on UNICEF strategies in basic education at its 1995 annual session (E/ICEF/1995/16 and decision 1995/21). The Executive Board decided to include a report on progress and challenges in achieving universal basic education on the agenda of the present session (decision 1998/19). The Board may wish to consider and approve the draft decision contained in the report.

**7. Progress report on the UNICEF strategy and investments in information technology**

[*For information – E/ICEF/1999/AB/L.6]*

Responding to a request from the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions for a comprehensive "office automation" strategy in the context of their review of the biennial support budget for 1998-1999 (E/ICEF/1998/AB/L.1 and Corr.1) at the first regular Board session of 1998 (E/ICEF/1998/AB/L.2), the secretariat offered to submit, through the Advisory Committee, a progress report on the UNICEF strategy and investments in information technology. The Board may wish to comment on the report and provide guidance to the secretariat, as necessary.

The Advisory Committee has informed the secretariat that it will not issue a report on the UNICEF information technology strategy for the present session. Any comments will be included in their report on the biennial support budget, which will be presented at the second regular Board session in September.

**8. Progress report on mainstreaming gender in UNICEF**

[*For information – E/ICEF/1999/13*]

In view of the importance of mainstreaming gender, particularly in the context of implementation of the Beijing Platform of Action, the Executive Board decided at its second regular session of 1998 to include this item on the agenda of the present session (decision 1998/19).

**9. Oral report on implementation of the health strategy for UNICEF**

In endorsing the "Implementation plan of the health strategy for UNICEF" (E/ICEF/1997/3) at its first regular session of 1997, the Executive Board requested the secretariat to report

orally at the present session on progress made in the implementation of the strategy (decision 1997/9).

**10. Reports on field visits of Executive Board members**

[*For information – E/ICEF/1999/CRP.8 and E/ICEF/1999/CRP.9*]

Selected by their respective regional groups, a team of Executive Board members visited Colombia and Peru in the Americas and Caribbean region, and another team visited Mozambique and the United Republic of Tanzania in the Eastern and Southern Africa region to observe UNICEF programme activities in the field. Each team will present its report on the field visits.

**11. Other matters**

The Board may consider discussing any other issues that it finds timely and appropriate under this agenda item.

**12. Closing of the session: remarks by the Executive Director and the President of the Executive Board**

The Executive Director and the President will make concluding remarks, followed by the closure of the session.

# Annex

## Proposed timetable and organization of work for the 1999 annual session of the Executive Board, 7-11 June*

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Monday, 7 June | a.m. | Item 1 | Opening of the session: statements by the President of the Executive Board and the Executive Director |
| | | Item 2 | Adoption of the provisional agenda and timetable and organization of work |
| | | Item 3 | Report of the Executive Director (Part II) |
| | p.m. | Item 3 (cont'd.) | Report of the Executive Director (Part II) (continued) |
| Tuesday, 8 June | a.m. and p.m. | Item 4 | Positioning UNICEF to meet the needs of children and women in the twenty-first century:<br>(a) Presentations by guest speakers and dialogue with Executive Board members<br>(b) Discussion of the following reports: "The future global agenda for children — imperatives for the twenty-first century"; "Progress report on follow-up to the World Summit for Children"; and "Programme cooperation for children and women from a human rights perspective" |
| Wednesday, 9 June | a.m. | Item 5 | Ensuring children's rights in Africa |
| | p.m. | Item 6 | Progress, challenges and future strategies in basic education |
| Thursday, 10 June | a.m. | Item 7 | Progress report on the UNICEF strategy and investments in information technology |
| | p.m. | Item 8 | Progress report on mainstreaming gender in UNICEF |
| | | Item 9 | Oral report on implementation of the health strategy for UNICEF |
| Friday, 11 June | a.m. | Item 10 | Reports on field visits of Executive Board members |
| | | Item 11 | Other matters |
| | | Item 12 | Closing of the session: remarks by the Executive Director and the President of the Executive Board |
| | p.m. | | |

* When consideration of an agenda item concludes ahead of the allocated time, the next item on the agenda will be taken up for consideration and the timetable adjusted accordingly.

United Nations E/ICEF/1999/9

# Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
5 April 1999

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**United Nations Children's Fund**
Executive Board
**Annual session 1999**
7–11 June 1999
Item 4 of the provisional agenda*

*For action*

## Progress report on follow-up to the World Summit for Children

*Summary*

This is the eighth annual progress report on implementation of the Declaration and Plan of Action of the World Summit for Children. It provides a global overview of progress by the international community towards the World Summit goals.

The report also contains information on actions taken to prepare for the end-decade review in 2001, and calls for concerted efforts to accelerate progress towards the World Summit goals in the remaining two years of the century.

* E/ICEF/1999/8.

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# I. Introduction

1. This is the eighth annual report on progress in follow-up to the World Summit for Children. It has been prepared in accordance with paragraph 35 (v) of the World Summit Plan of Action, which requests the governing bodies of the relevant specialized agencies and the United Nations organs to include a periodic review of implementation of the Declaration and Plan of Action at their regular sessions.

2. The report provides a global overview of progress made by the international community towards the major World Summit goals. Specific UNICEF actions contributing to this progress, especially those taken at the country level, and the results achieved, are described in the Executive Director's annual report to the present Board session (E/ICEF/1999/4 (Part II)).

# II. Overview of progress towards the World Summit for Children goals

## A. The global context

3. In 1998, the Secretary-General's report on "Progress on the Implementation of the World Declaration and Plan of Action from the World Summit for Children" (A/53/186), submitted to the fifty-third session of the General Assembly in response to its resolution 51/186 of 16 December 1996, highlighted the value of the World Summit agenda in promoting children's rights and improving their living conditions. The report provided an overview of progress towards the end-decade goals within the context of the Convention on the Rights of the Child; assessed the remaining major challenges to keeping the World Summit promises; stressed the relationship between the World Summit and the United Nations coordinated follow-up to the major summits and conferences of the 1990s; and provided information on the preparation process for the end-decade review. The Secretary-General's report recalled the importance of renewing and re-energizing the commitment to children by Governments, civil society, the private sector and the United Nations system itself. The report also stressed that when political commitment was strong, resources were made available, communities were mobilized, and sound policies and programmes were implemented, there could be notable progress for children, even within such a relatively short period as two to three years.

4. As the Secretary-General's report indicates and available data suggest, in spite of the general progress made towards the end-decade goals of the World Summit, achieving the year 2000 goals will be difficult, and a major acceleration in the pace of progress is required. The situation can be changed significantly through efforts at the country level, but the clear commitment and backing of the international community is also needed.

5. In 1998, the economic crisis in East Asia proved more contagious than expected, and most developing countries saw their export prices tumble. The crisis ended the hesitant recovery in many sub-Saharan African countries and markedly reduced the level of economic activity in North Africa and the Middle East as well as in Latin America and the Caribbean. According to the latest United Nations estimates, economic growth in developing countries slowed to 1.6 per cent in 1998, down from 5.5 per cent in 1997. The number of least developed countries that achieved per capita growth of 3 per cent or more fell to a mere 4 in 1998, compared with 12 in the previous three years.

6. These macroeconomic shocks led to an increase in poverty and disparity, and left millions of people without access to basic social services or with access to services of inadequate quality. Social statistics are not yet available to give a comprehensive picture, but preliminary indicators confirm the severity of the impact. In Indonesia, for instance, the latest government estimates show that 80 million people lived in poverty in 1998, compared with 22.5 million in 1996. Since the deepening of the financial crisis, some 400,000 children are estimated to have dropped out of primary school in Thailand. The crisis also affected the gender/age responsibilities within households, leading to an increase in child labour and prostitution in many countries.

7. The 30 country studies that were conducted as part of the 20/20 Initiative showed that both developing and donor countries continue to under-invest in basic social services. On average, developing countries allocated between 12 and 14 per cent of their national budgets to basic social services; donor agencies allocated a similar share of official development assistance (ODA) to these services. The recovery in social spending begun since 1990 is likely to have come to a standstill in many countries.

8. The debt burden remains a millstone for many low-income countries. The year 1998 witnessed stronger calls for a more radical initiative to solve the debt problem of the world's poorest countries, including the Jubilee 2000 campaign (established by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and calls for debt forgiveness by the year 2000). Of the countries surveyed in the 20/20 studies, about two thirds spent more on debt servicing than on basic social services. Malawi, for instance, which spends about 40 per cent of its

fiscal revenue on debt servicing, has a per capita income level of less than $200 per year and an average life expectancy that has fallen by an estimated 10 years because of the ravages of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Yet, under the parameters set by the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries initiative, its debt situation is considered as sustainable.

9. At the interregional meeting on the 20/20 Initiative, held in Hanoi in October 1998, both developing and developed countries renewed their commitment to increase allocations to basic social services and to enhance the equity and efficiency in their use. The meeting enhanced the quality of analysis by introducing the first comparative statistics on the level, distribution and efficiency of public and donor spending on basic social services for about 30 countries. This was a first step towards bringing special attention to the 20/20 Initiative at the United Nations special session, to be held in Geneva in 2000, to review progress since the World Summit for Social Development.

10. ODA fell to an historic low of 0.22 per cent of the combined gross national product (GNP) of developed countries in 1997. Moreover, much of ODA continues to go to middle-income countries. The secretariat of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development/ Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC) indicated that the cuts in ODA have hit hardest in countries with high child mortality and birth rates, and inadequate access to primary education and safe drinking water. Thus, the decline in ODA has been accompanied by a lesser focus on the poorest countries and the children in greatest need. This is inconsistent with the DAC goals of halving poverty, reducing under-five mortality by two thirds and ensuring universal access to primary education by 2015. The fall came mostly from the large donor countries, while the non-G-7 donors managed to maintain their levels of assistance. Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden continued to exceed the United Nations target of ODA/GNP of 0.7 per cent.

11. Children were also affected by the growing number of emergencies and conflicts. In the space of just four years, the number of emergency and conflict countries increased from 15 to over 55. It is characteristic of today's conflicts that children and women are increasingly targeted and brutalized, and the impact of these emergencies on the enjoyment of children's rights and on their living conditions is dramatic. Furthermore, over 300,000 children have been recruited as combatants in the 30 most recent conflicts, many of them abducted.

12. By the end of 1998, over 6 million children in Eastern and Southern Africa had lost their mothers to AIDS; by 2001, these children will number more than 10 million. Health services are over-run, with the number of health workers declining due to AIDS deaths. Basic education is endangered because of the increasing numbers of teachers dying of AIDS. In Zambia, for example, teachers are dying of AIDS at the rate of over four a day, considerably in excess of the Government's capacity to replace them. Unless extraordinary efforts are made, the progress in basic social services achieved in the past decades will be wiped out by the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

13. It was against this grim background that 1998 saw the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. The anniversary was marked by several events that confirmed an increasing international recognition of human rights, including the establishment of the International Criminal Court, the adoption of the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction and the United Nations Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally-recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. The year 1998 also saw the continuing, steady implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as illustrated by the submission to the Committee on the Rights of the Child of 29 national implementation reports, 13 of which were periodic reports assessing progress made over the last five years. These reports provide information on the measures adopted towards the realization of children's rights, including achievement of the World Summit goals and development of national and subnational plans of action.

14. The World Summit goals provide a powerful tool for mobilizing commitment and resources around children as well as for measuring progress towards the realization of their rights. Moreover, implementation of the World Summit Plan of Action has been increasingly enriched by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In the holistic context of the Convention, it is essential to assess the situation of all groups of children, identify those left unreached and provide priority attention to those who require special protection measures. In order to accomplish this, it is necessary to disaggregate data to identify and reduce prevailing geographic, ethnic, economic, social and gender disparities and, guided by the best interests of the child, to promote a multidisciplinary and cross-sectoral perspective in the adoption of policies, programmes and actions to improve the situation of children.

15. In the Latin American and Caribbean region and in East Asia and the Pacific, Governments reviewed progress towards the World Summit goals, and shared experiences

and lessons learned. Despite the economic setbacks in these regions, renewed commitments were made to accelerate progress towards the World Summit goals. The Bangkok Declaration and the Lima Accord both set clear strategies to focus actions in the remaining two years. Similarly, the League of Arab States issued the Sana'a Declaration on accelerating progress towards the World Summit goals. UNICEF actively supported these initiatives. It is expected that regional ministerial meetings will review progress at end-decade, and precede and inform the global events that will take place in 2001.

16. Building on methodologies adopted at the mid-decade review, more countries have prioritized the use and availability of data reflecting a child rights perspective in order to reveal and address socio-economic, gender, urban-rural, ethnic and other disparities often concealed in national averages. UNICEF, together with other partners, has supported countries with data collection instruments of ever-higher technical standards and also with direct assistance in data collection and analysis.

17. In support of the national reviews, UNICEF and partner agencies have defined a set of indicators to guide the process of assessing the World Summit goals. The list includes revised indicators to monitor progress towards the health, education and welfare goals of the World Summit, and a number of new indicators to fill critical gaps relating to other areas of children's rights such as child labour, birth registration, disability, alternative family care and early child development. Some of the new indicators came out of an international meeting held in Geneva in early 1998 to develop a core set of indicators for global monitoring of child rights in the context of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

18. Building on the experience gained in conducting the multi-indicator cluster survey (MICS) for the mid-decade, and informed by the MICS evaluation conducted in 1997, UNICEF updated the MICS field questionnaire and manual in line with the revised list of indicators. It also sought to harmonize MICS with other major survey programmes, in particular, the Demographic and Health Surveys sponsored by the United States Agency for International Development to generate comparable and complementary data. To facilitate preparations at the country level, UNICEF issued a time-frame of expected activities for reporting on progress for children and women at the end of the decade.

## B. Progress towards the major goals

19. Based on short-term priorities outlined in the 1998 World Summit report (E/ICEF/1998/8), and in consultation with country and regional offices, UNICEF has identified seven areas where progress towards the World Summit goals should be accelerated: reducing young child mortality and morbidity and preventing child disability; reducing maternal morbidity and mortality; improving access to and the quality of basic education; reducing exploitation, abuse and harm of children; improving early childhood care for child growth and development; improving young people's health and development; and improving the availability and use of data in critical areas.

20. Focused efforts were given to the programme priority areas for direct UNICEF assistance — for advocacy and resource mobilization. UNICEF country offices reviewed with national partners the opportunities for accelerating actions in 1998–2000 in these selected priority areas within the scope and framework of existing programmes of cooperation and in the light of the medium-term plan (MTP) for 1998–2001 (E/ICEF/1998/13 and Corr.1). Priority areas were also reviewed at the regional level by regional management teams. This provided a clearer focus for regional technical support and monitoring work, as well as additional guidance to country offices in their discussions with counterparts on possible areas where acceleration could be achieved. Built on existing mechanisms, a six-monthly review and reporting process was put in place at country, regional and global levels to monitor progress made, identify difficulties encountered and distill lessons learned. The seven above-mentioned areas were reflected in the MTP in the section on programme priorities. Specific UNICEF actions taken and results achieved to accelerate progress towards the World Summit goals are reflected in part II of the Executive Director's annual report.

### Under-five mortality

21. The World Summit goal is to reduce the 1990 under-five mortality rate (U5MR) by one third, or to 70 per 1,000 live births, whichever is lower by the year 2000. On the basis of currently available data, very little has changed at the regional level since the report to the Board last year.

22. Figure I shows an increasingly common picture, with industrialized countries showing the highest rate of reduction and the lowest level of mortality, and sub-Saharan Africa showing the lowest rate of reduction and the highest level of mortality. Of the other regions, four are approaching a similar mortality level, of around 50 per 1,000 live births and

below. While displaying mortality in the 1960s similar to sub-Saharan Africa, the remaining region — South Asia — has since managed greater reductions, although it still has a mortality level more than double most other regions.

23. The most recent mortality data reported by countries continue to show gradual reductions in most regions except in sub-Saharan Africa, where regional gains are offset by losses at the individual country level. The Niger, the country with the highest U5MR worldwide in the early 1990s, is showing signs of reduction. In other countries, however, the most recent data report a stagnation in the 1990s (Mozambique and Togo) as well as increases (Cameroon and Kenya). In the case of Kenya, the current estimate of under-five mortality is higher than the level in 1980.

24. While not the sole factor, resources have an impact on the ability of countries to reduce mortality owing to the need for basic services, such as those for primary education, especially for girls, and good quality health care. Thus, the reduction of ODA in the 1990s, which is even more marked for high under-five mortality countries, and the stagnation or reduction in GNP per capita in sub-Saharan Africa and Central and Eastern Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Baltic States over the same period, appear to have had an adverse impact. This causality deserves further consideration. A further cause for concern is the HIV/AIDS pandemic. While in 1997 the estimated proportion of deaths of children under five years of age due to HIV/AIDS was 4 per cent globally and 10 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa, the toll will rise higher in the immediate future, particularly in Africa. In such a situation, the effective focusing of interventions is critical.

25. *Areas of focus*. The prevention of measles and the elimination of neonatal tetanus are receiving specific attention. National Immunization Days (NIDs), held in over 90 countries in 1998, are proving successful in raising immunization coverage in many countries. They are also a particularly effective intervention when allied with vitamin A supplementation, since adequate vitamin A can reduce under-five mortality by one quarter. The doubling of vitamin A coverage rates in sub-Saharan Africa in the last two years highlights the feasibility of this intervention. The Roll Back Malaria alliance (launched jointly by UNICEF, the United Nations Development Programme, the World Bank and the World Health Organization (WHO) to fight against malaria in the poorest countries), also described in the Executive Director's annual report and other Board documents, has a major focus on Africa and the Mekong area, with the extensive use of bednets in controlling malaria. The Integrated Management of Childhood Illness initiative, which targets diarrhoea, malaria, measles, malnutrition and acute respiratory infections, continues to grow, extending to 58 countries worldwide in 1998 and attracting other partners, including the World Bank. Reducing mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS is being pursued vigorously in Africa and includes testing, counselling and treatment; raising awareness of prevention; and community support to people living with HIV/AIDS.

### Maternal mortality

26. The goal is to reduce by one half the 1990 levels of maternal mortality. WHO and UNICEF have estimated that in 1990, around 585,000 women died from pregnancy-related causes. However, it is now widely recognized that, in the short term, for countries without complete vital registration systems, the maternal mortality ratio cannot be used to monitor trends in maternal mortality reduction, and that process indicators will have to be used to measure progress. One of the process indicators that increasingly is being recommended for population-based monitoring is the proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel. A preliminary analysis of available data by WHO suggest that there has been only a very slight improvement over the last decade. For developing countries, the rates have increased from 53 per cent in 1990 to 58 per cent in 1997, which represents a change of only about one half of a percentage point per year. Process indicators on the availability and use of obstetric services published in 1997 by UNICEF, WHO and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), are now beginning to be used in a number of countries, including Bangladesh, Egypt, Ghana, Malawi and Morocco.

27. The critical elements required for reducing maternal deaths were clearly identified at the Safe Motherhood Consultation, held in Colombo in October 1997, and were reported in last year's report on the World Summit. As a follow-up to the consultation, 1998 was celebrated as the Year of Safe Motherhood, which was launched on World Health Day. This event was used to generate further awareness and action around the elements identified at Colombo and was marked by a series of advocacy events in countries around the world with the participation of national ministries of health, NGOs and United Nations agencies.

28. WHO, UNFPA, UNICEF and the World Bank have recently finalized a Joint Statement on Reduction of Maternal Mortality reflecting the broad consensus that has emerged on the most effective interventions for preventing maternal deaths. It constitutes an example of the common purpose and complementarity of programmes supported by the four agencies towards reducing and preventing maternal mortality and morbidity.

29. Moreover, a joint UNICEF/WHO/UNFPA workshop was held in Mexico in early 1999 to develop minimum standards and recommended practices for assuring women-friendly health services. The meeting was a first step in a longer process to elaborate on the criteria and standards required to improve the quality of maternal health care.

30. Of further relevance is the review of progress in implementing the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, which took place in The Hague in February 1999. This meeting highlighted the increased understanding of a human rights-based approach to reproductive health, including a shift from vertical service provision, demographic targets and quotas, to a rights-based, multisectoral approach to maternal mortality and morbidity reduction.

31. *Areas of focus*. To achieve the maternal mortality reduction goal, a combination of strategies and intersectoral approaches will be needed. Specific interventions include: (a) educating communities on safe motherhood and the rights of women; (b) improving access to essential obstetric care through support to communication and transport systems; (c) training midwives; (d) improving the nutrition of adolescent girls and women through community-based distribution schemes and antenatal care; (e) establishing "mother-friendly" health services to ensure that health facilities provide a basic minimum standard of care for mothers and their infants; and (f) improving the quality of prenatal and post-natal care.

### Child malnutrition

32. The goal is to reduce by one half the 1990 levels of severe and moderate malnutrition among children under five years of age. Data on child malnutrition from the Administrative Committee on Coordination/Subcommittee on Nutrition show that there has been some improvement in reducing child malnutrition worldwide, but the rate of improvement has been slow, and, moreover, it has decreased substantially in the 1990s. Global estimates show a decline from 34 per cent in 1985 to 31 per cent in 1990 and 29 per cent in 1995. In sub-Saharan Africa, the under-weight levels have been nearly static over the last decade. The importance of low birth weight is increasingly recognized. One half of the 22 million low-birth-weight babies born in the world each year are born in South Asia, where 30 per cent of all births are low weight and 60 per cent of women of child-bearing age are themselves under weight. The Administrative Committee on Coordination/ Subcommittee on Nutrition estimates are being updated to include projections for the year 2000, but final results are not yet available. It is clear, however, that for most countries, the rate of decline is dramatically lower than what is required to achieve the goal.

33. At its most basic level, malnutrition may be simply perceived as a consequence of disease and inadequate diet, but many more elements — social, political, economic and cultural — are involved. Malnutrition is both a consequence and a cause of poverty. It is the result of a complex interplay of factors involving such diverse elements as discrimination against women, lack of access to education and to correct information, household access to food, child and maternal care, access to basic social services, safe water and sanitation. Improving the status of women and advocacy for more and better targeted spending in the social sector contribute to reducing malnutrition.

34. Exclusive breastfeeding is promoted particularly through the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative, which is now operational in nearly 15,000 maternity facilities in 125 countries. However, only 20 countries have so far adopted the International Code of Marketing of Breast Milk Substitutes, adopted by the World Health Assembly in 1981, into law.

35. Progress was made in addressing vitamin A deficiency, iodine deficiency and anaemia. A total 43 countries, where vitamin A deficiency is a public health problem, added vitamin A supplementation to NIDs. At the policy level, there has been a shift from considering the importance of vitamin A in terms of blindness to a central role in child survival. Remarkable progress was made in reducing the risk of iodine deficiency disorders. The proportion of the world's edible salt that is iodized increased from about 56 per cent in 1997 to about 65 per cent at the end of 1998. The lack of scientific consensus on technical and operational problems in the area of iron deficiency anaemia was overcome in 1998 at a technical meeting of experts and field practitioners. Implementation of the recommendations from that meeting is expected to accelerate efforts to reduce iron deficiency anaemia in children and pregnant women in the coming years.

36. *Areas of focus*. While work must continue to change the fundamental social conditions that impede nutrition, including the promotion of women's rights and advocacy for better public spending in the social sector, it is imperative to focus on a number of actions that can produce relatively quick results in direct and measurable nutrition improvement. Priority actions for UNICEF include: (a) continued support for breastfeeding; (b) improved complementary feeding; (c) vitamin A supplementation; (d) universal salt iodization; (e) iron and folate

supplementation; and (f) growth monitoring in communities and health facilities.

### Basic education

37. The goal is to achieve universal access to basic education and completion of primary education by at least 80 per cent of primary school-age children by the end of the decade. The reduction of gender disparities is also part of the goal.

38. The proportion of primary school-age children in school continues to increase globally and for most regions, as indicated in figure II. The East Asia and Pacific region has achieved levels of net enrolment comparable to industrialized countries, and the Latin American and Caribbean region continues its slow but steady progress. The gains of the 1980s in the Middle East and North Africa region appear to be flattening in the 1990s. Both South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa had similar enrolment levels in 1980, but South Asia appears to have made more progress since then, although the number of children going to school is less certain in this region than in others. Sub-Saharan Africa, excluding South Africa, has yet to make up for the reduction in enrolment in the 1980s, and still has more than one third of its young children not attending school.

39. Determining children's progress in achieving a specific level of education is more difficult because the usual indicator, the percentage of children reaching grade 5, is based on older data than that for enrolment. As a result, net enrolment is currently considered the most appropriate measure. In addition, reaching grade 5, or completion of primary school, is primarily used as proxy for the quality of education. Yet considerable evidence exists that the correlation is weak, thus leading to the recent development of alternative measures of learning achievement.

40. Armed conflict and debt play significant roles in the education situation of sub-Saharan Africa, with armed conflicts affecting nearly one half of the countries, and three quarters of the countries heavily indebted. Large class size, poor teacher education, crumbling buildings, lack of learning materials and often the cost of education, all reduce education capacity and quality in the region.

41. Worldwide, an estimated 130 million primary school-age children are not in school, and more than 150 million teenagers have not reached a minimum level of education (grade 5). Although gender disparity has been reduced, nearly two thirds of children not in school are girls, and it still remains a significant issue in South Asia, where the difference between male and female enrolment rates is 12 percentage points; it is 9 in the Middle East and North Africa, and 6 in sub-Saharan Africa.

42. *Areas of focus*. Persisting gaps, particularly in gender, are being tackled through a variety of approaches, one of the largest being the African Girls Education Initiative, which has doubled the coverage of countries since mid-decade. Efforts at bringing children not attending school into the school system have been expanded, and coverage includes Bangladesh, Viet Nam, Yemen and countries in Africa. The promotion of more diverse and flexible schools in order to attract and better serve children is being pursued, particularly in Asia. Communities are getting more involved in the education of their children and participating in school management. Community involvement is particularly critical in the recent broadening of early childhood care programmes to help prepare children for school and schools for young children.

### Water and sanitation

43. The goal is to achieve universal access to safe drinking water and to sanitary means of excreta disposal. Current estimates suggest that this is far from being achieved owing to a wide variety of factors, including: the enormity of the task, with nearly 6 billion people to be covered; the increasing difficulties in obtaining water; conflicts, which have disrupted systems and sources; more limited financial resources, including ODA, particularly in areas most in need; and the fact that sanitation has very limited impact on disease reduction unless accompanied by often complex measures to promote behavioural change based upon increased awareness and understanding of hygiene issues.

44. Difficulties in measurement are an added challenge. Differences in the definition of "access" between and even within countries, and over time, are being tackled through efforts to improve routine monitoring systems and by making extensive use of household surveys. However, the use of a more rigorous set of definitions has highlighted the inconsistencies of earlier data and, as a result, changes over time are difficult to assess. Therefore, the present document reports on the current situation and on gaps in relation to universal access rather than on changes since 1990.

45. Figure III shows that all regions have a considerable way to go before achieving universal safe water coverage. The Middle East and North Africa, South Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean are the furthest advanced, with around 80 per cent coverage. The lowest coverage — about 50 per cent — is in sub-Saharan Africa. In sanitation, the highest coverage is in the Middle East and North Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean, where about two thirds

of the populations are covered — double the figures for South Asia and East Asia and the Pacific, which report coverage of less than one third of their populations. On average, rural coverage is lower than urban coverage for both water and sanitation, although coverage of the urban poor is also low.

46. *Areas of focus*. Particular attention is being paid to rural and poor urban populations, especially in the context of the trend towards privatization of water services, in order to prevent their further marginalization. Efforts in sanitation are placing increased emphasis on the integration of sanitation with hygiene and other interventions to maximize benefits to children. The participation of communities in improving awareness of environmental sanitation and achieving improvements through behavioural change is being pursued and needs further expansion.

**Child protection**

47. The goal was to improve the protection of children in especially difficult circumstances. It was not expressed in quantitative form, but progress can be assessed through qualitative indicators such as:

(a) Children requiring special protection have gained increasing visibility, including in major international conferences and initiatives such as the World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, held in Stockholm in 1996; at the Amsterdam and Oslo conferences on child labour in 1997; and in national follow-up activities. State parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child periodically inform the Committee on the Rights of the Child about measures adopted and challenges encountered in this area; several of them have addressed it in their national programmes of action and in national policies on children's rights;

(b) The Ottawa Convention on a total ban on the production, stockpiling and sale of landmines has led to growing awareness of the magnitude of the deaths and disabilities caused by landmines and has entered rapidly into force;

(c) The Graça Machel study and its follow-up have brought greater awareness of the plight of children affected by armed conflicts. The demobilization of child soldiers, psychosocial assistance and therapy, and trauma counselling, with particular attention to girls, increasingly have been supported in countries affected by war, including Chad, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka. Service delivery to and the social reintegration of displaced children and refugees have been supported in many countries affected by war and conflict. At the same time, standard-setting activities, including the Statute of the International Criminal Court and an Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child to raise to 18 years the minimum age of recruitment and participation in hostilities, have enhanced international attention to these issues;

(d) Considerable progress has been made in addressing child labour, and many countries have included relevant measures in their programmes for children, with special attention to education opportunities and basic health care. The Global March Against Child Labour took place between January and June 1998 and ended in Geneva at the start of the International Labour Organization Conference to discuss a proposed Convention to eradicate the worst forms of child labour. This Conference adopted a "Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its Follow-up", under which member countries are obligated to promote and achieve the effective elimination of child labour. There has been increased collaboration between UNICEF and the World Bank in child protection areas, especially in child labour;

(e) New partnerships have been developed with non-traditional partners, especially to address the issues of domestic violence, child prostitution and the trafficking of children and women. In China and Nepal, partnerships have been developed among public security systems, NGOs and families to tackle the trafficking of women and children. In West and Central Africa, a regional seminar on child trafficking was organized to enhance partnerships and cooperation. International standard setting activities have further enhanced awareness of these issues and have included a United Nations working group to develop an Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child against sexual exploitation of children, and work towards a protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in women and children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Organized Crime;

(f) Further action has been taken to address the devastating impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The regional HIV/AIDS programme in the Mekong Delta is a good example of enhanced collaboration to reduce the incidence and impact of HIV/AIDS on children and families. It provides and seeks opportunities for practical collaboration at all levels, between UNICEF, UNAIDS (the Joint and Co-sponsored United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS), and a broad range of government institutions, NGOs and other civil society and community organizations. Many countries have begun to develop strategies to reduce mother-to-child transmission and to support home-based and community care for young people. Initiatives have been developed to raise

preventive awareness and promote behavioural change among persons living with HIV/AIDS. The Sanga Metta project in Thailand, supported by UNICEF, engages Buddhist and religious monks, nuns and communities in efforts to enhance understanding and support to people living with and affected by HIV/AIDS. This project is now being expanded to Cambodia, southern China, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Mongolia.

## III. Keeping the promises to children

48. The foregoing analysis shows that many countries will not fully deliver on the promises made at the World Summit for Children in 1990. Despite notable advances since the World Summit, there is considerable variation in the progress made across countries and between goals. Analysis of progress at the country level highlights significant disparities between geographic areas and population groups and reveals a need for special priority to be given to those disadvantaged children who have been excluded from the progress enjoyed by others. Progress towards the World Summit goals requires a major acceleration, based upon firm commitments to the realization of children's rights from Governments, civil society, the private sector and the international community, including the United Nations system.

49. Achievement of the global goals set by the World Summit represents a challenge to the entire international community. Despite strong evidence that investing in children, particularly in the very early years, generates significant economic and social returns, resource allocations fall far short of what is required. The latest OECD/DAC analysis confirms a serious decline in aid to the poorest countries as well as to the social development goals set in the 1996 report "OECD Shaping the 21st Century: the Contribution of Development Cooperation". Any serious attempt to accelerate progress towards the goals will require an immediate reversal in the declining trend in ODA, increasing allocations to basic social services and to the countries that are lagging behind on the goals. The DAC report refers to pre-conditions for aid effectiveness, but efforts to pursue this important priority must not be at the expense of the 12 million children under five years old who die unnecessarily every year, or of the many millions more children who are left malnourished and scarred for life.

50. No amount of external aid can bring a better future for children unless it is matched by national commitment and desire to make a difference for a country's own children, even in difficult economic and political circumstances. As mentioned above, the Secretary-General stressed in his 1998 report to the General Assembly the need for strong political commitment to ensure that resources are made available, communities are mobilized, and sound policies and programmes are implemented, and that when this need is met, "notable progress for children can be achieved, even within a relatively short period of two to three years".

51. Experience over the past nine years has led to the identification of specific actions that can be taken to accelerate progress towards the goals if resources and political commitment exist. States that have ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child are requested to adopt all necessary measures to ensure the realization of children's rights. This implies the development of comprehensive national agendas for children's rights based on the Convention and including, *inter alia*: permanent mechanisms to promote coordination, monitoring and evaluation of activities across Government; measures to ensure that all legislation is compatible with the Convention; making children visible in policy development by introducing child impact assessments and carrying out budget analyses to determine the proportion spent on children and to ensure effective use of resources; ensuring that sufficient data are collected and used to improve the condition of all children; raising awareness and disseminating information on the Convention, including through training for all those involved in Government for children and working with or for children; and involving civil society, including children themselves, in implementing the Convention and raising awareness on children's rights.

52. The Ministerial Conferences on follow-up to the World Summit for Children, held in Lima and Bangkok in November 1998, illustrate the centrality of political commitment to the realization of children's rights. This process of regional cooperation plays a vital role in promoting the collection and analysis of relevant data, the identification of disparities, the promotion of policies and activities to address areas of concern, and the establishment of an enhanced sense of accountability for children. In addition, the regional consultations that have been held will lead to the development of regional and national agendas for children beyond 2000, thus maintaining the prominence of children's rights among national priorities.

53. But if real and lasting progress is to be made in the lives of children, the national and subnational levels are the most critical arenas for action. It is, therefore, imperative for each country to: (a) assess the current situation of children and women on a goal-to-goal basis; (b) organize reviews and policy discussions; (c) analyse the underlying factors that prevent, or may enhance, further progress in the situation of

children and women; (d) devise strategies and allocate resources to deal with these factors, while intensifying the use of available technologies and proven approaches to tackle immediate challenges to the realization of children's rights; and (e) strengthen national capacity, thereby building a sound foundation for the sustainability of all interventions.

54. Increased inter-agency cooperation will further support these efforts. The United Nations Development Assistance Framework/Common Country Assessment process has created important new opportunities in this regard, not the least of which is by stressing the importance of the substantive agendas of the United Nations conferences, including the World Summit, and conventions, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to guide the process of United Nations cooperation at the country level.

55. In resolution 51/186, the United Nations General Assembly decided "to convene a special session of the General Assembly in 2001 to review the achievement of the goals of the World Summit for Children, and to consider the arrangements for the special session at its fifty-third session". As mentioned above, the Secretary-General's report to the fifty-third session of the General Assembly, made particular reference to preparations for the special session of the General Assembly in 2001. Following discussions in the Second Committee, the General Assembly "decided to postpone to its fifty-fourth session consideration of the arrangements for the special session of the General Assembly" (resolution 53/193 of 15 December 1998).

56. The six initiator countries of the World Summit (Canada, Egypt, Mali, Mexico, Pakistan and Sweden) have expressed their interest in mobilizing other Heads of State and Government in support of both the special session and an additional international public event. In the latter event, particular attention will be given to the participation of civil society, and especially of children themselves. Consultations on the content and arrangements for both events have already begun. UNICEF will continue to actively support these efforts.

57. The form and objectives of the special session will be decided at the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly. It is anticipated that the session will include the review and endorsement of a comprehensive report by the Secretary-General comprising an overall assessment of progress during the decade, including: lessons learned; an analysis of the main factors that have inhibited progress for children; an overview of the remaining challenges and key issues; and specific recommendations for the future. Thus, the special session will provide an opportunity for the adoption of a new international agenda and set of benchmarks for the international community to achieve by 2015, as well as national strategies on children's rights.

# IV. Draft recommendation

58. The Executive Director *recommends* that the Executive Board adopt the following draft decision:

*The Executive Board*

1. *Notes* with satisfaction the overall progress being made in the implementation of the Declaration of the World Summit for Children and its contribution to the realization of children's rights;

2. *Recognizes* that extraordinary efforts are needed to accelerate progress towards the end-decade goals and, in this context, urges Governments to adopt appropriate strategies and to allocate to the maximum extent possible resources for action;

3. *Encourages* Governments to conduct periodic national and subnational reviews of progress in achieving the World Summit for Children goals, and in the broader context of the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child;

4. *Requests* donor Governments to reverse the declining trend in ODA and to grant steeper debt relief with a view to increasing allocation of resources to ensure universal access to basic social services, especially to those countries in greatest need;

5. *Requests* the Executive Director to continue to advocate for and support efforts by national Governments and other relevant actors in civil society to achieve the end-decade goals, within the framework of national and subnational programmes of action;

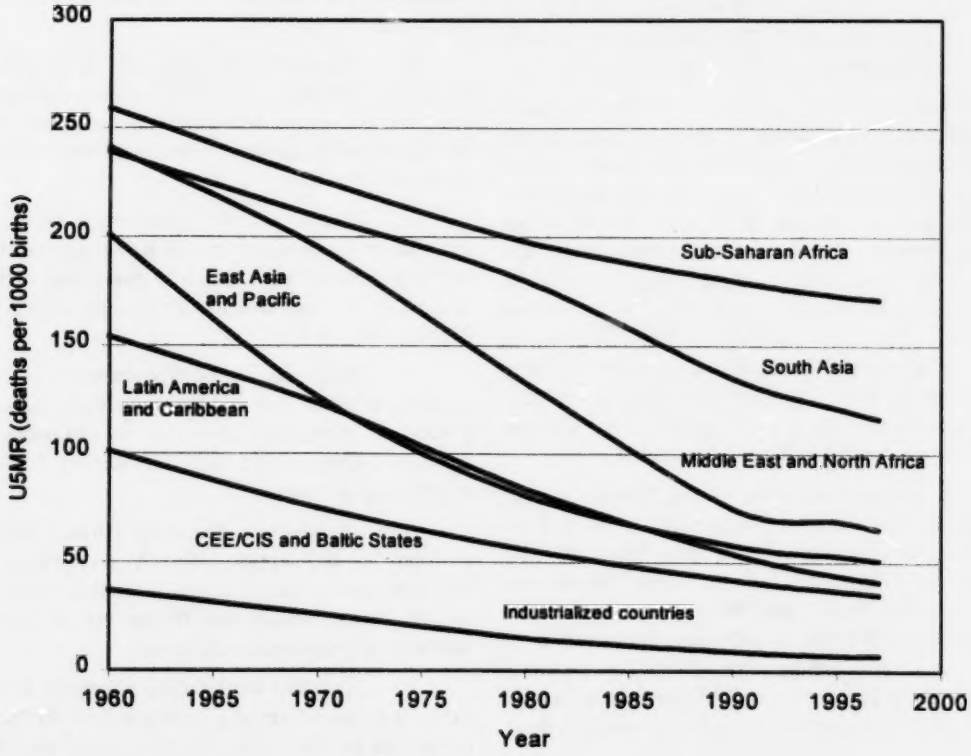
6. *Requests* the Executive Director to continue to work with Governments to strengthen further national capacities for the collection and use of data to monitor progress towards the end-decade goals;

7. *Requests* the Executive Director to support the Secretary-General in the preparation of the end-decade review in 2001, including an overall assessment of progress achieved and lessons learned during the decade, an analysis of the main factors that have inhibited progress, an overview of remaining challenges and issues, and specific recommendations for the future;

8. *Further requests* the Executive Director to report to the Executive Board on the implementation of the present decision at the 2000 annual session.

## Figure I

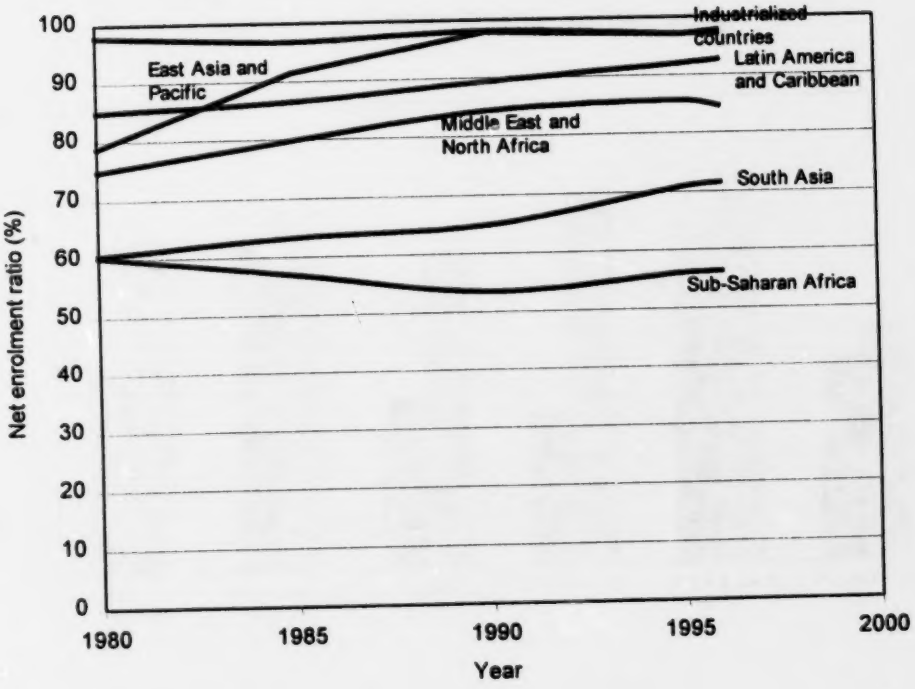
### Under-five mortality rate by region




Source: UNICEF

## Figure II

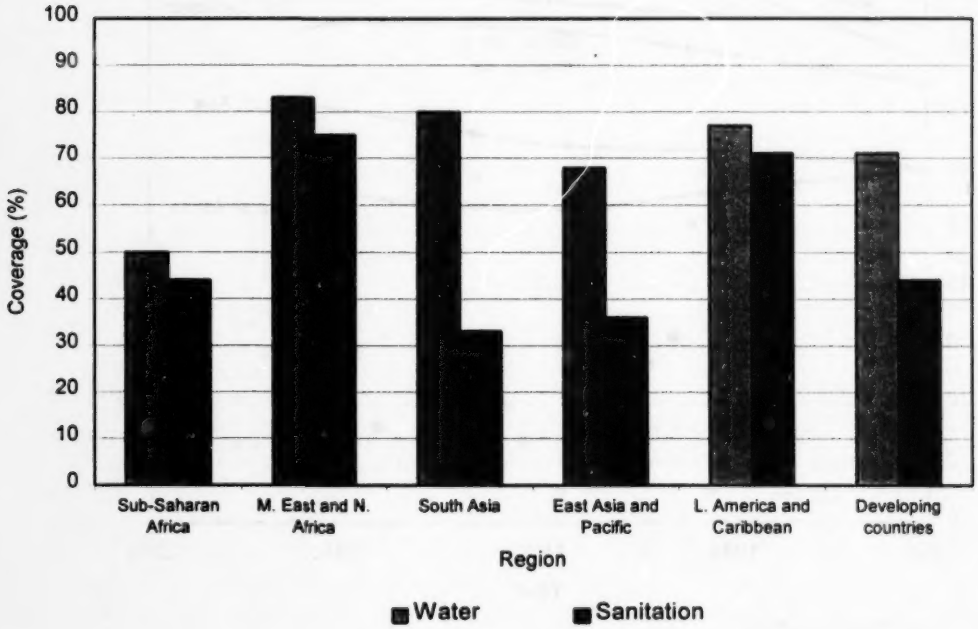
### Net primary school enrolment ratio by region




Source: UNESCO and UNICEF

## Figure III

### Safe water and adequate sanitation coverage by region (1995-1997)



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*For information*

## The future global agenda for children — imperatives for the twenty-first century

*Summary*

The present report outlines the UNICEF secretariat's preliminary recommendations for a future global agenda for children and the focus of UNICEF beyond 2000. These proposals build on the progress for children since 1990. They draw on lessons learned in the course of the decade and recommend actions to address some of the formidable challenges that require urgent collective action.

The report argues that there is already broad consensus on many of the issues that negatively influence human development. Most are persistent problems, but they are compounded by new concerns such as the HIV/AIDS pandemic, sharply declining official development assistance, rising national debt among poor countries, an unfettered global economy that is creating both unprecedented wealth and growing disparities, and increasing instability and conflict in many countries.

However, the report also reasons that major new progress in human development is possible within a single generation, if the global community will commit to three key outcomes for children.

* E/ICEF/1999/8.

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# I. Introduction

1. The UNICEF Executive Board and the UNICEF secretariat share a long tradition of seminal work for children. In 1990, this partnership paved the way for the first ever World Summit for Children and facilitated the elaboration of the World Declaration and Plan of Action for children. It also gave impetus to the successful campaign for universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Two notable Executive Board decisions — 1989/5 (E/ICEF/1989/12) and 1990/2 (E/ICEF/1990/13) — set the stage for the global effort to attain specific goals for children by 2000.

2. On the eve of the new century, it is again time to assess progress for children, re-examine global development priorities and consider what legacy this generation is leaving for those yet to be born. The focus for UNICEF is appropriately on what still needs to be done to significantly improve the situation of children and contribute to the full realization of their rights.

3. The present report outlines the secretariat's preliminary recommendations for a future global agenda for children and the focus of UNICEF beyond 2000. These proposals build on the progress for children since 1990, drawing on lessons learned in the course of the decade and recommending actions to address some of the formidable challenges that require urgent collective action.

4. This report argues that there is already broad consensus on many of the issues that negatively influence human development. Most are persistent problems, but they are compounded by new concerns such as the HIV/AIDS pandemic, sharply declining official development assistance (ODA), rising national debt among poor countries, an unfettered global economy that is creating both unprecedented wealth and growing disparities, and increasing instability and conflict in many countries.

5. The report also reasons, however, that major new progress in human development is possible within a single generation, if the global community will commit to three key outcomes for children.

# II. Lessons of the 1990s: new opportunities and future challenges

6. As studied and extensively documented in the 1990s, it is now clear that societies which manage to "get it right" for children are the ones that make major strides in human development. These are the societies that understand the importance of investing in children's health and education and the need to respect their dignity, and that see these imperatives as overarching national priorities. Such countries seize the unique opportunities of infancy and childhood to change the trajectory of human development in their countries by protecting the well-being of children and women and by making good quality basic education — the most fundamental determinant of future well-being — available for all children without discrimination.

7. UNICEF has long argued that the quality of life for women and children is the foundation for the success of all human endeavours. There is now an impressive body of data and scientific evidence which has established that it is possible to decisively change the course of human development for the better by shifting national investments to favour children's survival, protection and development. Based on this, the world may finally be ready to embrace this knowledge and to act on it.

8. By their very complexity, many of the obstacles to human development defy sector-focused strategies alone. Development partners will be called upon in the new century to forge broad new alliances by reaching beyond traditional sectors and governmental structures to include, as equally important partners, people's movements, community-based organizations, the mass media and others who share the concern for human progress. By applying universally-recognized principles of human rights through development strategies, it is time to rethink how human situations are analysed and understood, how poverty and violence are transmitted between generations, and why discrimination and poor human development are still so inextricably linked in so many countries, despite economic progress.

## A. Progress since 1990

9. Progress during the 1990s since the World Summit for Children has been impressive. Among the achievements is the significant new reality that children in 191 countries live in States that have ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and 161 countries have agreed to respect standards set in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. This means that women and children in virtually all countries can make legitimate claims on their societies. In addition, the focused efforts of the 1980s and 1990s to eliminate diseases such as polio and to reduce readily preventable infant and child deaths have been remarkably successful. The data at the end of the decade will tell a story of significant progress in a relatively short period

and of many promises kept to children. These remarkable achievements include the fact that:

(a) Polio is on the verge of eradication;

(b) Deaths due to measles have been reduced by 65 per cent globally;

(c) Deaths from neonatal tetanus are down by more than one quarter;

(d) Some 12 million children no longer risk mental retardation due to iodine deficiency in their diet;

(e) It is possible that guinea worm will be eliminated before 2000;

(f) Blindness due to vitamin A deficiency has been reduced significantly;

(g) More children are in school today than at any time previously;

(h) Some 71 per cent of people have access to clean water — an increase of more than 10 per cent since 1990;

(i) Issues such as child labour, the sale and trafficking of children, child prostitution, gender-based violence and child soldiers are now more widely acknowledged as violations of children's rights and widespread problems, and there is growing political will to address them.

## B. Future challenges

10. Despite such progress, however, major obstacles to human development persist, and many of them are very basic to peoples lives and well-being. Thus:

(a) Some 12 million children under five years old still die annually of readily preventable causes. Of this number, 8 million are deaths before 12 months of age, and two thirds occur in the neonatal period (the first month of life);

(b) For every neonatal death, another child is born with a physical disability, and 22 million newborns each year weigh less than 2,500 grams. These infants have a death rate 5 to 30 times higher than normal weight babies and exhibit increased risk of disability;

(c) Malaria during pregnancy, associated with low-birth weight, accounts for approximately 5–10 per cent of infant deaths;

(d) Malnutrition still retards the physical and mental development of some 160 million children;

(e) An estimated 250 million children below the age of 15 years, and many below the age of 10, are engaged in child labour;

(f) The number of school-age children who currently have no access to primary education is estimated to be 130 million, and girls are still the vast majority;

(g) Basic sanitation is still unknown to more than 3 billion people (more than one half of humanity);

(h) Childbirth is still a life-threatening event for millions of women, and an estimated 585,000 die needlessly due to related causes.

11. The escalating HIV/AIDS pandemic in many parts of the world has added a new burden for millions of people. If current trends continue, child survival and life expectancy gains of recent decades will be reversed in several countries, most of them in sub-Saharan Africa. New infections are occurring at the rate of 5.8 million per year, of which about 50 per cent are among children and youth aged 10–24 years. It is projected that by 2000, in 23 seriously affected countries, 19 of which are in Africa, the total number of orphans from all causes (including HIV/AIDS, war, famine, maternal deaths and other diseases) may exceed 24 million.

12. Although the size of the global economy today is counted in trillions of dollars, the combined sales of the world's top 200 companies are larger than the combined economies of 182 countries. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has also recently issued the bleakest report ever on ODA trends, noting a 21 per cent overall decline in ODA between 1992 and 1997 (*Development Cooperation Report* 1998). For the poorest countries, the drop has been sharpest and the inequities even more alarming.

## C. The key lessons

13. The new agenda for the future must draw on development lessons of the 1990s. It must promote the concept of respect for the dignity and equality of all people, and especially, it must redress the historical discrimination that has faced women and girls for no reason but that of gender. It must be characterized by courage to tackle both the immediate and underlying causes of problems that face poor communities. Cultures of violence and exploitation must be challenged. The multiple reasons why education systems fail millions of poor children and the various forms of discrimination that prevent all children equally from realizing their full potential must be exposed and addressed. Above all, the new agenda must focus on breaking the

poverty cycle that for so many people has passed from generation to generation.

14. This will require far greater attention in the future to the needs of millions of poor families who cannot care for and protect their children. The human development goals of the future will not be reached if families are unable to nurture children and create positive learning experiences for them. The accident of a family's status cannot be allowed to determine a child's development path. Complementary short- and longer-term development goals and strategies in the future must, therefore, focus on providing the safety nets that will enable poor children to pull themselves out of poverty through access to care and protection, health services, good quality learning opportunities and participation in community life.

15. The decade of the 1990s has shown that global goals can provide powerful spurs to action as well as important benchmarks for measuring progress. The pursuit of quantifiable targets must not compromise efforts to build sustainable systems and local capacity. Another important lesson is that attention to underlying and structural causes of problems is necessary to ensure that short-terms gains are not easily reversed. UNICEF has learned that success takes time and sustained effort. There are no easy shortcuts to lasting social change, but remarkable progress is possible when Governments commit themselves to the realization of children's rights.

16. For UNICEF, a global commitment to sustainable human development means an agreement to make child survival, protection and development the cornerstone for future progress. For this to occur, however, major changes in several areas of development planning and prioritizing will be necessary. Such changes should be guided by the norms and standards established by the two Conventions and by the remarkable consensus on the necessary conditions for progress that the global development conferences of the 1990s have forged.

### D. Creating the enabling environment

17. Concerted and renewed efforts are, therefore, necessary to sustain past progress and make significant new breakthroughs possible for children during the first decade of the twenty-first century. Governments and the international community must work to create an enabling environment that will include efforts to:

(a) Strengthen and secure the capacity of States to play their role as the effective protector of children's and women's rights, including by ensuring access to basic social services and a standard of living adequate for children and families to meet their basic needs. This should also include attention to fiscal and budgetary policies;

(b) Strengthen partnerships between States and civil society organizations that foster the best interests of children, and promote the use of resources in an efficient, accountable and collaborative way;

(c) Ensure that girls and boys are encouraged from the earliest age to respect each other's inherent dignity and equality, and that societies make every effort to remove the obstacles to women's equal status, empowerment and full participation in all aspects of community life;

(d) Ensure that education and learning processes help to form both human capital for economic growth and social capital for tolerance, respect for others and the right of each individual to participate with equality within family, community and economic life;

(e) Encourage the participation and self-expression of children, especially adolescents, in the contexts of family, school and community life; and make concerted efforts to end civil and cross-border wars around the world and to challenge the culture of violence that threatens to destroy family and community life in so many countries.

## III. Elements of a global agenda for children

### A. Building on the legacy of the past

18. As the new millennium approaches, there is a yearning for a bold new vision and a search for effective approaches that will make dramatic progress possible. The global development conferences, the OECD/Development Assistance Committee agreement on goals for the future and the widely ratified human rights treaties are a rich legacy of the 1990s. They provide both the normative and operational frameworks for the future. However, identifying the critical entry points that will unleash major transformations remains a key challenge.

19. UNICEF believes that the choice of new goals must continue to reflect the understanding that there are inherent links between the survival, development and general well-being of children, and the realization of women's rights. This understanding has created unique and fundamentally

transforming opportunities to refocus future development priorities on responding to the basic needs and unrealized aspirations of millions of disinherited women as well as on the realization of children's rights.

20. While further discussions and broad consultations are needed, UNICEF believes that several key aspects of a renewed human development agenda are already quite clear. Priorities must be informed by the abundant scientific evidence that critical human development opportunities occur early in a human life, and once missed are almost irretrievable. Global action is necessary to ensure that social policy decisions are guided by this knowledge and that the appropriate human development investments are made when the chance to positively influence the course of human development is greatest.

## B. Responding to opportunities for human development

21. UNICEF proposes that the international community and national Governments should make a global pact to work assiduously in the next decade towards the universal realization of the three significant outcomes for children. This commitment would necessarily require Governments and the global network of cooperating agencies to commit to strategic new goals that focus on overcoming the circumstances that currently make these results for children difficult to achieve.

22. UNICEF proposes these three outcomes for children because within them lies the key to breaking persistent cycles of poverty. They call for significant changes in the allocation of public sector investments, the political will and renewed efforts to resolve conflicts, combat HIV/AIDS, overcome discrimination and violence and to help poor families, and especially women, to care for and protect their children.

23. UNICEF believes that these outcomes are possible because the knowledge, resources and strategies are available in today's world. Therefore, the organization will call for leadership at all levels to realize this bold vision for human development and for children, and for national Governments and international organizations to commit to making this possible.

24. The three priority outcomes for children are:

(a) Infants start life healthy and young children are nurtured in a caring environment that enables them to be physically healthy, mentally alert, emotionally secure, socially competent and intellectually able to learn;

(b) All children, including the poorest and most disadvantaged, have access to and complete basic education of good quality;

(c) Adolescents have opportunities to fully develop their individual capacities in safe and enabling environments and are helped to participate and contribute to their societies.

25. Pregnancy, infancy and early childhood are among the most critical periods for human development. However, in spite of the real progress for women and children in the 1990s, the share of national and international development resources allocated to ensure safe motherhood and child development still suggests that this knowledge is little known or poorly applied in development policy and planning. The continuing high rates of maternal mortality, the insignificant progress in reducing perinatal and neonatal deaths or low birth weight in so many developing countries, the incidence of preventable disability, high rates of maternal and child malnutrition, and excessive failure and drop-out rates in the first grades of primary school are some of the stark indicators of missed opportunities to overcome wasted human potential by investing in comprehensive programmes for early childhood care and development.

26. The long-standing commitment to ensure that good quality basic education is universally accessible to all children must finally be taken seriously in all countries in the twenty-first century and must become an overriding priority for the next decade. Millions of poor children, most of them girls, still lack access to a classroom, and thus are unable to share the joy of discovery through education and to uncover and develop their inherent talents. Millions of others fail because schools are not stimulating or because poor children enter school too nutritionally depleted, too traumatized by violence in their homes and communities or too overworked to learn.

27. Among the most disadvantaged are the children trapped in acute poverty, combined with exposure to dangerous and exploitative circumstances beyond their control. Millions of orphans in sub-Saharan Africa, disabled children with unmet needs, those conscripted as soldiers, child prostitutes, child brides or child workers, and those unsettled by conflict and economic meltdown constitute the vast majority of children out of school today. These children will almost certainly face the added risks of early parenthood, HIV/AIDS and juvenile crime. They will almost never close the earning gap between themselves and their educated peers, and almost certainly, they will pass on their poverty to their own children. Poorly funded, rigid and traditional approaches to schooling will not make basic education rapidly available to these children. Therefore, the

new century demands bold new initiatives in basic education.

28. Adolescence, which the above group also reflects, is another time of critical transition in human development. Increasingly this age group is at the forefront of societal concern because of extremely high school drop-out rates, early marriage and early child-bearing, violence, drug addiction, HIV/AIDS or alienation from the political process of their countries. These are some indications and outcomes of the increasing marginalization of teenagers. These problems tend to shape the responses to adolescents and overshadow the overwhelmingly positive contributions they make. Through their creativity, energetic acceptance of challenges, contributions to social change and help to younger siblings, often as heads of households, adolescents are a positive force and an untapped resource in all communities.

29. Because many adolescents, both married and unmarried, are parents at very early ages, with their children at greatest risk of death, disability and abuse, there is growing appreciation of the intergenerational impact that adolescent behaviour exerts on future human development and community life. In addition, the HIV/AIDS pandemic has focused attention on the challenges faced by this age group as well as on the need for societies to consciously plan for their health, participation and development.

## IV. The future focus of the work of UNICEF

30. While UNICEF will still emphasize the importance of protecting children from various forms of preventable death, the future UNICEF agenda will go beyond survival. It will place early childhood care and development and equal access to good quality basic education as the global centrepiece of its programme strategy to reduce poverty and realize the rights of children. On a more selective basis, the organization will support specific programmes for adolescents, especially focused on preventing HIV/AIDS and developing their skills to cope with life's challenges.

31. UNICEF work in the future will also be enhanced by greater attention to maternal health and nutrition, safe motherhood and the cognitive and psychosocial development of young children. This more integrated approach to the development of young children will create a sounder basis for investments in primary education. Greater programmatic emphasis will also be placed on involving poor families in the search for solutions and on strengthening community-based strategies for child care and development and basic education.

32. Working closely with other partners and within the context of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), UNICEF will engage national partners in dialogue to help shape policies and national priorities, giving emphasis to: meeting the basic needs of the poorest; protecting the rights of women and children; and placing children's protection, survival and development at the centre of national development efforts.

33. Broad-based partnerships and convergent sectoral initiatives will be supported to facilitate better integration of programmatic elements needed for children to survive, grow and develop optimally. With partners such as the World Bank and the regional development banks, the World Health Organization, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, as well as non-governmental organizations, UNICEF will work to make child development more widely understood as a prerequisite for the success of basic education strategies and a subject requiring far greater attention from Governments for overall human development.

34. UNICEF will also focus on galvanizing political will and securing a commitment to global social action that will fundamentally change the way the international community assumes its responsibility towards children. The wavering commitments to the two Conventions in many developing and industrialized countries and declining resources for development are trends that must be reversed. UNICEF and the United Nations system must work to convince national Governments and the international community that investing in children's well-being and protecting their rights are the surest way to regain momentum for human development, to build cohesive societies and to make a quantum leap in positive social change within one generation.

35. In the coming months, UNICEF will be discussing its specific contributions to the future global agenda for children with a wide range of partners, especially with its UNDAF partners. Technical consultations will be undertaken with development researchers and practitioners in different regions, as well as with experts in children's issues, to further elaborate and validate the proposed strategies for implementing this agenda and for assessing future progress. UNICEF will focus on enhancing the organization's technical competence in each of the priority areas identified and further define specific results for which UNICEF will hold itself accountable.

36. The next medium-term plan, covering the period of 2000–2003, will be presented to the Executive Board in 2000. It will contain recommendations for Executive Board approval on specific actions to be undertaken by UNICEF in the context of a new global agenda for children.

## V. The next steps

37. In the coming months, UNICEF will engage in broad consultation on both the proposed global agenda for children beyond 2000 and the UNICEF contribution. Members of the Executive Board, United Nations agencies and Governments will be engaged in a dialogue on the strategies, roles and commitments needed to move forward. The process of defining this agenda more fully will provide opportunities to forge a broad coalition of leaders for children, leading to events planned for 2001 to celebrate achievements and launch the new agenda for children.

38. A special session of the General Assembly is planned in 2001 to examine the results of a decade of action for children following the World Summit for Children. In addition to this special session, UNICEF will mobilize leaders from Government, community and civil society organizations, the private sector, special ambassadors and child leaders around the proposed new international agenda for children.

39. The purpose of this mobilization is to generate new momentum and political commitment to human development goals, giving priority attention to children. The process of mobilization for this alliance at national and regional levels will be as important as an eventual global event. The Executive Director has begun consultations with the six original initiators of the World Summit and other development leaders on the content and emphasis of this process, and will seek the guidance of the Executive Board as these ideas evolve.

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*For information*

## Programme cooperation for children and women from a human rights perspective

*Summary*

The present report describes progress made by UNICEF in implementing Executive Board decision 1991/9 (E/ICEF/1991/15) on the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It reviews recent experience and discusses how UNICEF country offices are applying human rights principles and perspectives to programmes of cooperation with national partners for the realization of children's and women's rights, within the context of initiatives for United Nations reform.

The report highlights how the normative framework of international human rights standards systematically guides the practical work of UNICEF in fulfilling its mission and mandate and its support to national implementation efforts. It presents lessons from country experiences and describes how programmes for improved outcomes in the survival, development, protection and participation of children are strengthened by this normative frame of reference.

The report outlines how principles of good programming, such as the assessment and analysis of the situation of children, the use of disaggregated data to identify and address disparities, participatory approaches, partnerships, community capacity building and empowerment, become programmatic imperatives from a rights perspective. It discusses how principles of equity and non-discrimination can be used to develop approaches to the structural as well as immediate factors that affect the realization of children's and women's rights. It highlights the importance of accountability towards children at political,

* E/ICEF/1999/8.

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institutional and community levels and outlines the cross-sectoral, convergent focus of UNICEF work on the physical, emotional and intellectual development of children. Finally, the report outlines some of the challenges to building organizational capacity and learning for programme cooperation in a rights perspective.

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"We the peoples of the United Nations ... determined ... to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom, ... have resolved to combine our efforts to accomplish these aims" (United Nations Charter).

The purposes of the United Nations are: "... to achieve international cooperation in solving international problems ... and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion" (United Nations Charter).

"Every individual and every organ of society ... shall strive ... to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance... among member states themselves." (Universal Declaration of Human Rights).

"The advancement of human rights needs to be integrated into all principal United Nations activities and programmes". (Secretary-General Pledges 'Quiet Revolution' in United Nations, Presents Reform Proposals to General Assembly, 17 July 1998, Press Release SG/SM/6284/Rev.2, GA/9282/Rev.2).

# I. Introduction

1. The dramatic political changes in the world in the last 10 years and the implementation of reform measures within the United Nations have refocused attention on the vision of the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. The fundamental values and purpose of the United Nations system were defined through these documents, which remain as valid today as when they were written.

2. The message that resonates through both the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is that the quest for justice, equality, peace, security, people's participation and the sustained improvements in the quality of life of all people are inseparable human pursuits. These compelling human aspirations have shaped the body of binding international human rights instruments and are reflected in the development goals adopted by various global conferences, notably in the 1990s. All these concerns remain central to the work of the United Nations on the eve of the new century. In common with other members of the United Nations family, and in the context of the current reforms, UNICEF continues to explore ways of making its advocacy and programme cooperation contribute more effectively to the realization of human rights.

3. The entry into force of the Convention on the Rights of the Child a decade ago gave renewed impetus to the original mission and mandate of UNICEF. General Assembly resolution 1391 (xiv) of 20 November 1959 stated that "aid provided through [UNICEF] constitutes a practical way for international cooperation to help countries carry out the aims proclaimed in the Declaration of the Rights of the Child". In 1991, the report to the Executive Board on the role of UNICEF in the implementation of the Convention on he Rights of the Child stated that it "provides UNICEF and other operational bodies of the United Nations family with a new opportunity to demonstrate how the principles of human rights can become an integral part of the daily work of development agencies". (E/ICEF/1991/L.7, paragraph 58).

4. The Secretary General's reaffirmation in July 1997 of the principle of the founding documents of the United Nations that human rights and human development are inseparable concepts, both of which are integral to the mission of United Nations agencies, has helped to define the context in which the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs) are currently evolving. Guidelines for the UNDAF and the Common Country Assessments (CCA) to which it is linked, emphasize the role of participating agencies in supporting the national implementation of a range of development goals, informed by the United Nations human rights mandate and applicable international standards. In recent months, both the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank have issued policy papers on development and human rights.[1]

5. As the new millennium approaches, dialogue and closer reflection are taking place among development partners on practical approaches to the progressive and sustained realization of human rights, including those of children. Current discussions on the role and obligations of Governments, the strategic contribution of international cooperation, the importance of vibrant civil society and community organizations, the links between peace, security and the satisfaction of basic human needs, gender equality, the recognition that children are holders of rights and the links between women's status and overall human progress, all have a basis in international standards of human rights.

6. Development organizations such as UNICEF increasingly are being called upon to help national partners find ways to mobilize the resources and develop the tools and capacities necessary for the sustained implementation of their treaty obligations. This requires the ability to build strong linkages between justice and the rule of law, the formation of public policy, the equitable allocation of resources for basic human needs and the facilitation of social and economic processes that support families and community-led initiatives. Development partners working in a human rights perspective must also give renewed attention to activities that enable women and children, especially adolescents, to participate fully in shaping the personal and public spheres of their lives.

# II. The UNICEF mandate and mission: a rights perspective

7. An almost universal consensus has provided the basis for the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and, to a considerable extent, of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Together with the declarations of recent global summits, this constitutes a broad agreement that the realization of children's and women's rights is a fundamental condition for sustained improvements in human development. The vast majority of States have now accepted legally binding forms

[1] "Integrating Human Rights with Sustainable Human Development", a UNDP Policy Document, 1998; "Development and Human Rights, The Role of the World Bank", The World Bank, 1998.

of accountability towards all those in respect of whom they exercise jurisdiction, including children and women specifically.

8. As an international development organization tasked by its mandate and mission statement to advocate for the protection of children's rights, to help meet their basic needs and to promote the equal rights of women and girls, UNICEF has worked since the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990 to identify and promote ways in which normative processes of international human rights law can inform and guide practical actions in favour of children and women. The organization has moved from viewing the Convention primarily as a basis for global advocacy to exploring both its role and the role of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women as normative frames of reference for the design and implementation of programmes of cooperation with national partners. Both Conventions provide a basis for policy dialogue with Governments and other development partners, through a process which assists the understanding of the overall factors affecting the realization of children's and women's rights and of the specific priority actions which need to be taken in each country context in order to promote them. The aims and principles of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women have become more central to the concerns of UNICEF cooperation as the links between women's status and the achievement of such major development goals as poverty reduction, child survival, the elimination of malnutrition, maternal mortality reduction and educational achievement are better understood.

9. UNICEF has been encouraged by the degree of commitment with which many Governments are approaching their obligations under both Conventions. Requests from national partners for advice and assistance in meeting treaty obligations to children and women have prompted UNICEF to follow closely the work and concluding observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and, more recently, the work of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Through its assistance to country programmes, UNICEF is responding to these, to the mission statement adopted by the Executive Board in 1996 and to the roles of UNICEF envisaged in Article 45 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. UNICEF offices are working with national partners, in an increasingly systematic way, to identify explicitly rights-based approaches to such complex problems affecting the realization of human rights as maternal mortality, HIV/AIDS, child labour, malnutrition and the access of girls to education, and to reflect these approaches in their mutual cooperation.

10. Securing the rights of children in situations of armed conflict has also become a major concern for countries in every region. The Convention on the Rights of the Child incorporates humanitarian law in Article 38 and thereby provides a basis for an integrated approach to programming in unstable environments. The Convention allows no derogation in emergencies and emphasizes that access for all children to protection and basic services is always an imperative. UNICEF is drawing on international humanitarian law to guide its work and partnerships for women and children displaced by armed conflicts.

11. In 1998, following extensive consultation and assessment of various programming initiatives, the Executive Director issued initial guidance for field offices on a human rights approach to UNICEF programming for children and women (CF/EXD/1998/04). This document provides staff with an overview of key principles that are common to most human rights instruments. It emphasizes the importance of both Conventions to the work of UNICEF and outlines how a rights perspective should inform the various stages of the programming process, within the context of the UNDAF and national policies. This thinking is also reflected in the medium-term plan for the period 1998–2001 (E/ICEF/1998/13 and Corr.1).

12. Recent approaches in UNICEF also emphasize the inseparable connection between the pursuit of children's and women's rights and the progressive and sustained achievement of human development goals. This linkage is particularly evident when examining the reasons for relatively slow progress towards some of the more complex goals adopted for the year 2000 by the World Summit for Children. Increasingly, issues related not only to national policies and programmes but also to cultural, economic and other deep-rooted factors in society are seen to affect outcomes in child survival, protection, development and participation, and for this reason, may need to be explicitly addressed.

## III. Programming from a rights perspective

13. Human rights instruments share a number of core principles. For UNICEF, these principles increasingly serve as conceptual "ground rules" for approaching development issues from a human rights perspective and also as guides to better programming. In addition, they provide a basis for discussion with partners on the overall aims and specific strategies of development activities.

14. The adoption of a rights-based approach to development is not seen as necessarily requiring a major revision of development goals and objectives. Many well-established development programmes, including those aiming to provide universal access to basic services, have been broadly consistent with human rights principles and often have effectively promoted them, albeit not always explicitly. However, some fundamental reorientations of strategic approach will be required to fully reflect a rights-based approach in programme cooperation; these are, in many cases, already being adopted. They involve the revision of programme strategies to place clear emphasis on participation by people who are poor, as well as on equity and universality; on empowerment of communities and families to take effective action for improved health, education and other outcomes; and on the use of a mix of indicators to measure progress which better reflects the factors affecting the realization of human rights in society. They also include giving higher priority to interventions to address rights issues, notably in respect of children's protection and self-expression, which have been widely underemphasized in development policies in the past. The principles discussed below are therefore not unique to a rights approach to development, but they become imperatives for programming from such a perspective.

15. National and global development goals for children's survival, better child and maternal health, for every child's access to good quality basic education, for universal access to clean water and safe excreta disposal, and for poverty reduction more generally, all have a normative basis. They have common roots in the principle that all human beings are created equal in dignity and in rights. On this basis, all persons have a right to an adequate standard of living and to those basic services that enable them to live with dignity, to meet their basic needs, to gain access to opportunities for realizing their full human potential and to participate in shaping the processes that influence the quality of their daily lives.

16. From a rights perspective, and based on key principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, development goals and programmes for children should aim to: (a) ensure that all children, boys and girls equally, survive and are nurtured and protected in their homes and communities in ways that enable them to develop through growth and learning; (b) ensure that they have equitable access to the highest attainable standard of basic services and the widest scope of opportunities, including for education, participation and self-expression; and (c) further enable them, through such access, to create for themselves and their societies, better opportunities for the future.

## A. Addressing discrimination and creating conditions for the universal realization of rights

17. The universality of rights, perhaps the most fundamental principle of human rights, calls for efforts to ensure that the rights established by Conventions are realized equally for all children and women. This means that development programmes need to address both the effects and the causes of exclusion and the denial of rights among some groups and individuals in society, including the processes which perpetuate various forms of inequality, discrimination and exploitation. A corollary of this approach is that attention is needed not only to increasing the coverage of basic services to higher overall levels; but also to identifying the groups and individuals who still lack access, establishing an understanding of the reasons why, and adopting specific measures to address these shortfalls together with those who remain excluded. Further, the universality of rights necessitates attention to the situation of children of all ages, defined by the Convention on the Rights of the Child as persons up to the age of 18 years.

18. The principle of the "best interests of the child" established in the Convention requires that "in all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration" (Article 3). This principle supports a child-focused approach to development. It points to the need to listen to children, to their rights to be informed and have their views taken seriously. In matters not governed by specific affirmations within the Convention, the "best interests" principle also provides States with criteria to evaluate the extent to which their laws and administrative practices operate in favour of children. This principle has been effectively invoked to argue, for example, that basic services for children and women must be protected during periods of economic austerity, political crisis and emergencies, as a matter of obligation. In addition, the principle relates directly to issues at the local level, such as the siting of new water points and the scheduling of school timetables.

19. These and other principles are also informing the nature of UNICEF interaction with sector-wide approaches and investment programmes. An approach to development based on human rights entails that issues of social inclusion, community and individual participation, service quality, sustainability and equitable outcomes should be seen as important factors in setting sectoral goals and as criteria for

assessing the success of reforms. For example, questions to be addressed in education sector reforms may include not only increased overall enrolment rates and learning achievement goals but also the degree to which schools will become safe, conducive and responsive learning environments for children, or will offer more equitable access to girls and to children who are working, orphaned or disabled. Issues in health system reform may need to include the degree to which the system ensures easy and dignified access for women from poor families to services needed to ensure safe pregnancy and childbirth, as well as participation and accountability in the service delivery process. A number of UNICEF offices, such as those in Bangladesh, Ghana and Zambia, are supporting Governments to integrate issues of this nature as part of social sector reforms and in mainstream service delivery.

20. The evolution of perspectives based in human rights has also helped UNICEF in recent years to reorient its programme approaches to children in need of special protection. This thinking was presented to the Executive Board in 1996, in a report on UNICEF policies and strategies on child protection (E/ICEF/1996/14). In programming for highly disadvantaged children, a rights perspective starts from the premise that societies have an obligation to ensure equitable access to the protection and services enjoyed by all other children, as a matter of central concern for public sector policies, administrative practice and expenditure. This includes rights to health care, basic education, freedom from violence and the safety and protection of a caring community.

21. This approach reflects a more general shift from a time when the most disadvantaged children were widely considered as objects of charity rather than holders of rights with valid claims on society. They were often perceived as problems to society rather than as individuals affected by society's failures to meet its obligations to all its children. Today, UNICEF approaches to children in need of special protection encourage Governments and other partners to take priority actions to meet the immediate needs of such children, while at the same time addressing the systemic problems that deny them opportunities for health care and learning, and which may force them out of families and schools into dangerous occupations or conflict with the law.

22. Programming from a rights perspective also calls for a better definition of quantitative and qualitative indicators, in order to reflect new areas of intervention and a stronger focus on attitudes and practices, participatory processes and issues of inequality. Several UNICEF regional and country offices are developing child rights data bases and, as in Latin America and the Caribbean, are producing social indicator bulletins with partners that examine questions of equity as well as overall access to basic services. A number of recent country-level situation analyses, such as those in India, the Islamic Republic of Iran and South Africa, have focused particularly on disparities, both in terms of outcomes among children and women and their causes.

23. Where data collection is disaggregated, for example by gender, type of household and geographical area, this facilitates better assessments of the situation of children and women and a more comprehensive understanding of factors that help or hinder the realization of their rights. Efforts to collect disaggregated baseline data have been undertaken in a large number of countries, including through national household surveys. In Eastern and Southern Africa, South Asia, and East Asia and the Pacific, UNICEF has initiated work to include key development indicators, disaggregated where possible to the district level, in a regional "Child Info" data base. The "TransMONEE" project, which monitors social conditions in economies in transition and is based at the International Child Development Centre, is a further example of disaggregated data analysis at a regional level. Multiple indicator cluster surveys (MICS) to measure progress towards goals for children and development are another key instrument to support the analysis of disparities as well as overall national achievements, and to provide a basis for country programme strategies that address more directly the needs of especially disadvantaged children.

## B. Shaping more convergent approaches to development outcomes

24. The interdependence, indivisibility and complementarity of rights are further important guiding principles for programming. Both the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women demonstrate the integrated and mutually reinforcing nature of civil, political, cultural, social and economic rights. While these Conventions establish no hierarchy among rights, development programmes which aim to promote their realization are still faced with the challenge of establishing priority areas for immediate action. Medium-term goals and objectives can assist in giving substance to the interventions agreed as having priority in the country context. The prioritization process itself should, however, be based on a comprehensive assessment of the status of children's and women's rights, as well as on a discussion of which areas constitute the greatest immediate threats to or opportunities for pursuit of these rights, an analysis of the reasons for

current trends, and an understanding of why past development activities either failed or succeeded in contributing to progress. Given that the full and sustained realization of human rights often will entail profound changes — in institutional structures, legal provisions, access to resources, social attitudes and practices — the selection of strategies and priority actions for the short-term should also be guided by a vision, among development partners, of how such longer-run shifts in society can effectively be promoted and achieved.

25. The linkages between children's and women's rights are increasingly well understood. It is widely recognized, for example, that the status and education of women and girls are among the factors most critical to lowering infant mortality rates and improving the health, nutrition and education of children. Women's status, role and well-being are central both to human development and to the realization of the human rights of children. The persistence of grossly unequal gender relations and wide gender gaps in the social, economic, political and civic spheres not only constitutes a denial of the individual human rights of girls and women, but also tends to reduce human capabilities and threaten social cohesion. At the same time, progress in realizing the rights of children, including specific actions for the rights of girls, can contribute decisively to breaking the persistence, from one generation to another, of discrimination against women. Development strategies and practice have yet to fully reflect the importance of these linkages. From a rights perspective, it becomes important for programme strategies, including those of the partners in the United Nations system, to achieve convergence between efforts for the realization of the rights of children and of women.

26. A rights-based approach to development has also reinforced the UNICEF focus on issues of well-being for the child as a person whose capacities are evolving and whose needs are simultaneously physical, emotional and intellectual. This perspective was previously reflected in the 1984 policy document on early childhood development (E/ICEF/1984/L.1), which outlined the importance of strategies that address the whole child and create synergy between the multiple activities required to ensure the survival, growth, development and protection of young children. The strong links to the health and well-being of the child's mother, and the recognition of the responsibilities of both men and women for the nurturing, protection and education of the child, are now being further emphasized in the context of a rights-based approach. The changing needs of children as they grow, and the need for consistency between interventions targeted to children at different ages, including in adolescence, is also receiving greater recognition.

27. The design of more convergent approaches to development outcomes for children should also be based on an understanding of the roles and obligations of various actors in society in respect of children's rights. Analysis at the family level can highlight the practical difficulties faced by parents, care givers and local voluntary associations in contributing to the rights of children, including, in many cases, a lack of access to services, information and economic resources. This analysis can also lead to better understanding of the extent to which such public institutions as schools, health facilities, municipal councils and extension services actually fulfill their obligations to families and children, and the constraints they face in doing so. Such analysis may increase awareness of the roles of national bodies in ensuring a supportive legal, policy and regulatory environment for the realization of rights and making resource commitments for the achievement of specific development goals. It can guide international cooperation to support these national obligations; and generate a wider recognition of the need for empowering families and communities to undertake and act upon their own analysis of issues affecting the rights of children.

28. In all parts of the world, customary laws, social practices and cultural values exert major influences on the degree to which children and women exercise their rights. Development partners need to understand these factors prior to designing programme approaches and to work closely with national and local organizations to address those practices that may either be harmful to women and children or represent strengths on which to build. In dealing with female genital mutilation, for example, approaches need to combine legislative measures with advocacy, communication and other strategies to bring about changes in established attitudes and practices. As seen in Senegal, this can create a social movement in favour of both the enactment and enforcement of legislation which protects rights. In the case of HIV/AIDS, such traditions as extended family care for orphans need to be recognized as a legitimate social service, even if external support is also required to help communities and families cope with the burden. Constructive and engaged approaches to cultural values are thus of central importance to the sustained realization of human rights.

## C. Strengthening the programming process

29. Assessment, analysis and the search for actions that lead to sustained outcomes involve participatory processes

that engage families, community leaders and children. A rights approach necessitates that UNICEF and partners relate to and support people who are poor as key actors in their own development. This implies the need for — and not merely the option of — programmes that establish and support dialogue and interaction between families, communities and public sector service providers and decision-makers. It makes increased and equitable participation — such as the self-expression of children in school settings or in judicial proceedings, based on their age and capacities — both a key strategy for development outcomes, as has been widely recognized in the past, and a desired outcome in itself. A rights approach thus implies specific efforts to strengthen participatory processes in society, as well as in development programmes, by promoting conditions and opportunities for it to grow.

30. Partnerships with local authorities are generating dynamic approaches to participatory programming in such countries as Benin, Colombia, Georgia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Jamaica, Mauritania, Mexico, Nigeria and Uganda. The use of a rights-based framework in these and other countries has created a broader view of issues affecting children and greater consensus on the actions required at various levels of society, building in some cases on plans of action developed following the World Summit for Children. As part of decentralized programme implementation, mayors and city and regional councils also have been mobilized in the promotion of children's rights, including in Brazil, Croatia, India, Malaysia, Mauritania, Nicaragua, Peru, Poland, Romania and South Africa. The growth of local "child-friendly movements", such as that in the Philippines, is a further example of approaches which can result in increased recognition of children's rights in such institutions as schools and health facilities and in local administration.

31. Meanwhile, the analytical content of situation analyses of children and women supported by UNICEF has evolved, as countries have aimed to identify the causes of outcomes affecting children's rights. The approach to this analysis used by many countries in the 1990s was based on the conceptual framework contained in the UNICEF nutrition strategy adopted by the Executive Board in 1990 (decision 1990/19, (E/ICEF/1990/13)). This has been further oriented towards a more explicitly rights-based framework which includes examination, at the level of structural causes, of the values, laws, policies and patterns of resource access that affect child survival, development, protection and participation. Recent country examples of such analysis include Albania, Angola, Cambodia, India, Kenya, Mauritania, Niger, Pakistan, the Philippines, Somalia and Thailand. The assessment and causal analysis of the status of children's and women's rights can be key contributions supported by UNICEF to knowledge and understanding of these issues and to the CCAs undertaken by United Nations country teams as a whole. They also provide a basis for promoting the interests of children and women through advocacy and policy dialogue and through the building of consensus on priority actions.

32. As recognized by the 1990 nutrition strategy and shown by experience since, identifying strategies for improved outcomes for children and to reach and sustain development goals, calls for partners to review the causes of problems at different levels and to ask why certain conditions seem to persist. A lack of economic resources may be one cause of inadequate outcomes, especially in individual households and communities. Often, however, these outcomes have as much to do with the distribution of resources in society, unequal access to public services, the unequal status of women and discrimination against or exploitation of certain social groups. For this reason, the reduction of poverty and the realization of children's rights cannot be divorced from the building of just and equitable societies, supported where necessary by public policy reforms.

33. Experience has also shown that operational strategies to achieve and sustain outcomes that contribute to the realization of children's rights cannot be based on sectoral approaches alone. This was recognized in the 1970s and 1980s by efforts to achieve integration in basic service provision and continues to be evident in renewed efforts to design convergent approaches for the improvement of early childhood care. During the 1990s, the persistence of such problems as malnutrition and HIV/AIDS has brought this awareness still more sharply into focus. In the case of malnutrition, the care of both children and mothers is frequently a central factor in ensuring healthy growth, in addition to a safe environment, family food security and access to basic services. In the case of HIV/AIDS, unequal gender relations, the social vulnerability of girls and a lack of attention to the specific needs of adolescents are among the underlying reasons why the virus continues to spread in so many countries, affecting young people aged 10–24 years and girls disproportionately.

34. Stronger distinctions are now being made in practice between assessment (the "what"), analysis (the "why") and action (the "how") in respect of child-related development outcomes and the status of children's and women's rights. While the assessment phase should take account of the full range of concerns of both the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, analysis of

particular problems among these leads to strategic choices and the design of interventions. Many programming processes have aimed especially to strengthen the analysis of gender relations in society as a guide to making strategic choices on priority actions. Work being undertaken to enhance UNICEF capacity in this area of work is described in the progress report on mainstreaming gender in UNICEF (E/ICEF/1999/13).

35. With improved assessment and analysis in a human rights framework, it is becoming easier to distinguish between the necessarily broad scope of UNICEF concerns for all children and women and the more specific priorities for UNICEF direct support to programme interventions in a national or local context. Taken together, these encompass a range of possible programme strategies, including: well-targeted advocacy on key issues for children's and women's rights; support to national assessment, legislation, policy development and monitoring of these rights; and, through other forms of programme cooperation, support to local initiatives, capacity-building and participatory action for basic service delivery and protection. While UNICEF engages with a range of national and international partners in advocacy, policy dialogue and in efforts to mobilize resources for children and women, it must continue to focus its direct support on those more specific areas where, in the country context, it has a comparative advantage and capacity to make a significant difference for children and their families.

36. In all regions, a human rights perspective has reinforced the search for collaboration opportunities that go beyond well-established partnerships in such areas as health, clean water and education to include agencies providing public safety and judicial, legal and welfare services, often at decentralized levels. Alliances with development banks, specialized agencies, professional and media groups, trade unions and employers' federations, and community and civil society organizations also characterize the broadening scope of UNICEF engagement in partnerships based on solidarity for children. Many of these alliances are focused on initiatives to reach the most marginalized groups and exploited children, whose rights are often least realized and respected.

37. In many countries, a rights-based approach has prompted UNICEF to explore options for supporting linkages between "mainstream" service delivery systems and "alternative" systems that benefit, and are often organized by, the poorest communities. Progress towards universally available services that provide equitable opportunities for the most marginalized groups in society has occurred at different speeds, depending on such factors as the state of public infrastructure and the extent of political commitment. Reliance on individual "area-based" projects has rarely proved sufficient to achieve this. In most regions, reorienting the public sector to meet basic needs for services and protection of the people who are poorest remains a major development challenge.

38. The mix of programme strategies now evident in new programmes for UNICEF cooperation, and in recommendations thereon to the Executive Board, thus tends to include a greater focus than in the past on supporting a range of policy reforms, building local capacity for basic service delivery, leveraging wider resources, broadening partnerships and facilitating community-led action, with special attention to the sustained participation of women, youth and children. Through the focus on partnerships, it is also possible to identify the key roles and necessary contributions of different sectors and actors and to situate UNICEF cooperation more strategically within broader developmental frameworks, such as the UNDAF, that will contribute to the rights of children and women.

39. In addition to the formulation of new programmes of cooperation, the mid-term reviews (MTRs) of current programmes often have provided opportunities for partners to devote more explicit attention to priority issues of children's rights. Adjustments adopted as a result of recent MTRs include: expanding the focus on children in need of special protection; restructuring programmes to support the development of cross-sectoral approaches; and strengthening the focus on generating behavioural change and focusing more directly on strategies to reach the most disadvantaged children and families. Also, where pilot initiatives have successfully combined an extension of basic service coverage with participatory approaches, MTRs have provided a basis for taking them to a larger scale.

40. The scope of UNICEF evaluation work in support of country programmes and for wider knowledge acquisition is also broadening in response to the challenges of a human rights approach. Current methodologies will need to be refined, and in some cases, new ones developed to support evaluative work not only on the impact but also the processes and outcomes promoted by programme cooperation, including participation, capacity-building, behavioural development and attitudinal and policy change. Qualitative methods increasingly are being used in programme evaluations, as well as approaches which recognize children, parents and communities as partners in the learning process.

41. A rights perspective has underscored the benefits to programming of a longer-term guiding vision, particularly

of a consensus for children which forms a central part of national policies for human development and human rights. Such a framework, particularly if developed through wide participation, can generate momentum for policy reforms and more reliable resource commitments. It can provide a basis for durable partnerships and alliances – including between agencies in the public, non-profit and private sectors – and assist in the identification of priority areas for international cooperation. The national plans of action for children have, in some countries, provided impetus towards these broader frameworks based on the centrality of children to development and the recognition of societal and public sector obligations for their rights.

42. In relation to this, the reports of States Parties and concluding observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women have played an increasingly important role in influencing national policy choices related to children, as well as in helping to identify priority issues for country programmes of cooperation. The work of UNICEF at country level has helped to inform States Parties' reports, as well the Committees' process of review, and in many instances UNICEF has assisted national entities in meeting their reporting obligations. Technical cooperation between countries is also growing in this area, an example being the assistance provided by Child Rights/Asianet in the preparation of country reports throughout South Asia. The Committees' concluding observations on States Parties' reports, as well as additional information provided by United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), have helped in turn to inform choices for country programme cooperation. One example is the greater emphasis placed by UNICEF on support to birth registration and public information on children's rights as a result of observations provided in 1997 on Bangladesh's report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. The national reporting process also provides an opportunity for United Nations agencies to examine how they can best collaborate to support national efforts to both monitor and comply with human rights treaty obligations.

43. A more specific issue of concern for the United Nations system is the limited resources available to support the work of the treaty bodies. The currently slow pace of work of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the backlog in reviewing the reports of States Parties runs the risk of providing a disincentive for States in their efforts for reporting.

## D. Developing rights-based indicators and monitoring

44. The need has emerged for a well-established set of indicators that will help to illuminate progress on both the processes and outcomes that contribute to children's rights across and within countries and over time. A number of indicators are already widely used, based in part on the goals of the World Summit for Children, and have been monitored through such mechanisms as the MICS. However, indicators have not yet been fully developed or widely adopted in some areas of children's rights, such as those relating to protection and participation. Specification of local standards against which monitoring will take place is also needed in some cases. A UNICEF-supported meeting in 1998, which brought together international experts in development, statistics and human rights, identified a preliminary set of indicators as well as selection criteria for areas which so far lack a basis for indicator definition. While this work will need further development, it is an important step in advancing the monitoring of the progressive achievement of children's rights.

45. As part of the preparation for measuring progress at the end of the decade, questions on birth registration, child labour, disability and orphans have been incorporated into the MICS questionnaire, . As a result, the end-decade review of progress towards the goals of the World Summit for Children is expected to generate data covering each of the six thematic clusters of rights issues defined by the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

46. The Child Rights Monitoring Project, initiated by Child Watch International and supported by UNICEF and several other donors over the period 1994 to 1998, has stimulated the development of child rights monitoring activities at the local level in a number of countries, including Nicaragua, Senegal, Thailand, Turkey, the United Republic of Tanzania, Viet Nam and Zimbabwe. A training package resulting from this work provides a basis for developing local level rights monitoring systems in additional countries. The growth of "child-friendly" initiatives will also provide experience in the participatory use of indicators for such systems. The checklists provided in the UNICEF "Implementation Handbook for the Convention on the Rights of the Child" is another tool to assist partners in programming and monitoring.

## E. Building organizational capacity and learning

47. The future agenda for UNICEF and other development partners based on human rights will, to some degree, call for new approaches, competencies, partnerships and working methods. The development of staff capacity will be a specific priority for UNICEF in the next few years. Skills will be required throughout the organization in at least three critical areas to support effective programming and cooperation in a human rights perspective:

(a) Competencies for supporting planning processes central to a rights-based approach to programmes, including (i) the instruments of assessment, analysis, strategy development, implementation, monitoring, review and evaluation; and (ii) the integration in programming of measures to protect rights in situations of instability, to promote sustained participation, to reach people who remain excluded, to mainstream gender concerns and to assist the building of capacity in national partner organizations;

(b) Competencies for developing and managing programme partnerships based on the pursuit of outcomes for children's and women's rights, including with Governments, non-governmental, regional, civil society, private sector and community-based organizations, as well as with United Nations partners, the World Bank, the Save the Children Alliance, bilateral donors and others. This will include skills for developing advocacy partnerships for the protection of children's rights, which will sometimes involve sensitive issues where violations of these rights occur; for the leverage of resources for children and women; and for support to policy, legislative and sector reforms;

(c) Competencies for designing and pursuing strategies for convergence among sector-based activities and programmes to promote the achievement of cross-sectoral outcomes among children. Part of these competencies would include the acquisition of core information and understanding of how positive results can be sought, based on the best scientific knowledge and experience worldwide. More specific areas of technical competence will be needed among programme planners and other specialists, in areas of priority UNICEF focus for the next decade. These will include: early childhood care for survival, growth and development; basic education for learning achievement; and support to adolescent health and participation.

48. Because many aspects of a human rights approach require staff to address issues of social attitudes and behaviour, UNICEF capacity development will also focus on programming and communication skills for facilitating processes of participatory planning, behavioural change and community-led problem-solving. A focus will be placed on learning from experience and exposure to the thinking and practice of UNICEF-supported programmes which have focused successfully on these approaches and on learning from external agencies, including NGOs.

49. Assessment and documentation of innovations and more systematic dissemination of experience will need to take place in order to: (a) enable UNICEF to analyse what is learned as human rights principles are more widely and explicitly reflected in programmes of cooperation; (b) apply lessons more systematically in cooperation with partners; (c) update and revise programming guidelines, methodologies and training materials; and (d) facilitate stronger ties between countries that share common problems and possibilities for action, both within and across regions. UNICEF headquarters has appointed a senior officer to work with regional and country offices to facilitate lessons learning and the development of resource materials for rights-based programming, and to maintain programme-related dialogue in this area with international development partners. UNICEF is also establishing an electronic database on progress being made around the world in implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This will be available through the UNICEF site on the world wide web and will include illustrations of the laws, structures, policies and processes that are being put in place to improve the situation of children within the framework of the Convention.

50. With regard to humanitarian crises, UNICEF has responded to field requests for support in training in international law and standards applicable in armed conflicts and unstable situations. The first field training took place in East Africa in February 1999. The training protocol aims both to raise awareness of the existing standards in human rights and humanitarian law and to establish the human rights framework as a practical tool in situations of crisis for children's and women's rights.

# IV. Conclusion

51. In the context of current reform measures, it is encouraging that consensus is progressively emerging among United Nations country teams on the convergence between the human rights and development mandates of the various agencies. The CCA and UNDAF processes are moving the partnership among agencies closer to the vision of development and the role of the United Nations defined in its Charter, working within a more clearly normative

framework. This has been the case, for example, in Colombia, Namibia, Viet Nam and Zimbabwe. A rights approach to development cooperation, founded in assessment and analysis, can be an effective instrument for enhanced partnerships and inter-agency collaboration based on a vision of how the United Nations system and its individual agencies can best contribute to efforts, by a range of national partners, for the realization of development goals and human rights. In the context of United Nations reform, the practical application of human rights principles in development cooperation, including that for children and women, is becoming more firmly established as a system-wide concern. From the perspective of UNICEF, country obligations in respect of human rights, together with national priorities and the agreed goals of global conferences, provide the foundation and the normative basis for United Nations collaboration with Member States. In this context, UNICEF has a leading role to play in ensuring that children's rights are a common concern for development partners and in providing advisory support for this area.

52. As the present report has indicated, UNICEF is in the process of gaining experience in the many dimensions of rights-based programming, and some of the more complex issues are still emerging. UNICEF has, however, an extensive body of previous experience from which to draw and learn, in programming for areas such as integrated approaches to young child development, basic services and reaching the most disadvantaged groups. Meanwhile, the recognition has grown within the organization and beyond that a human rights approach to programme cooperation, addressing both immediate and structural factors, is crucial for the lasting impact of initiatives for children. By emphasizing partnerships and participation, a human rights perspective can enhance the ownership of development programmes by local actors and the empowerment of people who are poor. It can also help to strengthen the accountability to parents and children of political leaders, public service providers and community organizers. It provides a basis for making the goals and commitments of international conferences such as the World Summit for Children more binding — and for making choices on practical, priority actions for children that contribute to the progressive realization of their rights. Monitoring and public reporting in fulfilment of Convention obligations can make issues of human rights more evident and information more readily available for citizens as well as development partners. As discussed in this report, UNICEF is playing direct support and advocacy roles in each of these dimensions of international cooperation for the pursuit of children's and women's rights.

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## Ensuring children's rights in Africa

*Summary*

The present report was prepared in response to Executive Board decision 1997/19 (E/ICEF/1997/12/Rev.1), in which the Board recalled the UNICEF commitment to Africa as the region of greatest need and highest priority, and requested the Executive Director to report in 1999 on progress made in efforts to ensure children's rights to survival, development and protection in Africa.

Following a review of UNICEF experience of support to Africa's children during the decade of the 1990s, the report provides an update of recent trends affecting the rights of children and women on the continent. It describes the current strategic focus of UNICEF work in the main subregions of greatest need, particularly sub-Saharan Africa, and assesses the key areas in which effective partnerships and leadership will be needed if sustained progress is to be achieved.

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# I. A decade of investment in Africa's children: directions and lessons learned

1. Childhood in Africa has been in jeopardy for most of this decade. As the continent prepares for the new century, children and women, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, remain acutely vulnerable and exposed to the combined impact of economic crisis, unserviceable international debt, armed conflicts, spreading violence and the unrelenting HIV/AIDS pandemic. To varying degrees, these crises have diverted attention and resources away from the longer-term development efforts of African Governments for investing in children, and from their essential roles in the societal effort to ensure children's and women's rights.

2. Within this challenging context, UNICEF advocacy and programme cooperation during the early part of the decade were centred on the goals adopted in 1990 at the World Summit for Children by world leaders from all continents. With the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child by all African countries, except Somalia, and with the reaffirmation of commitment to the goals for children at the International Conference on Assistance to the African Child which took place in Dakar, Senegal, in 1992, under the auspices of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), most African countries produced national plans of action (NPAs) to implement these goals. In the early 1990s, these and other initiatives encouraged a stronger policy focus in many African countries on the reduction of child death rates, disease and malnutrition as well as the promotion of universal primary education.

3. In several cases, such as Nigeria, South Africa and Uganda, the NPAs for children were extended to local government levels as part of national policies for devolution. The NPAs also helped to strengthen the focus of UNICEF-assisted programmes of cooperation in Africa on the policy environment and intersectoral approaches to achieving results for children. However, the extent to which the NPA initiatives were sustained varied greatly among countries. In some cases, national goals for children, and strategies to achieve them, were integrated in overall development plans. NPAs were valuable for some countries in providing an analytical base for monitoring implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and in mobilizing private sector partners. Elsewhere, however, NPAs were affected by difficulties of costing, weak monitoring and lack of mainstreaming in national planning, or were superseded by outbreaks of conflict.

4. The UNICEF contribution to the achievement of substantial results in some areas of the World Summit goals, such as health, education and clean water, was complemented, particularly in west and central Africa, by the introduction of the Bamako Initiative as a means of addressing more systemic challenges in health service delivery and financing. However, during this period, more limited focus was devoted to growing challenges such as HIV/AIDS and malaria.

5. A mid-decade review presented to the United Nations General Assembly by the Secretary-General in September 1996 showed that, despite impressive progress in areas such as salt iodization, the use of oral rehydration therapy and the reduction of cases of guinea worm, sub-Saharan Africa was generally lagging behind other regions. Immunization coverage rates, for example, had risen rapidly in the early years of the 1990s but had then tended to stagnate. Little overall progress had been registered in goals for school enrolment, sanitation access and the reduction of maternal mortality. The rate of decline in child mortality, while significant, was slower than in other regions. The review also raised concerns on the sustainability of progress and the spread of HIV/AIDS.

6. The unevenness of progress in much of Africa was a major reason for the launching of a global initiative for accelerated achievement of programme priorities within the scope of the World Summit as part of the current UNICEF medium-term plan (MTP) for the period 1998-2001 (E/ICEF/1998/13 and Corr.1). With support from the UNICEF regional offices, a clearer set of priorities has been established, for which it is considered both feasible and urgent that progress be made in sub-Saharan Africa in the remainder of the decade.

7. Many of the mid-term reviews (MTRs) of UNICEF-assisted country programmes in the second half of the 1990s have resulted in a more balanced mix of strategies and a better focusing of objectives. New country programmes of cooperation designed with Governments in sub-Saharan Africa since 1995, such as those in Ghana, Mali, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania, have incorporated greater attention to issues of capacity-building, the promotion of positive behavioural change and community participation. These approaches recognize the need to combine continued support to basic services delivery, with improved policies and systems for sustaining progress, and with a more explicit focus on the progressive achievement of children's and women's rights.

8. Strategies for capacity-building are gradually becoming more broad-based, incorporating participatory analysis of the problems and strategic needs of institutions. While training activities have been implemented by almost every UNICEF-assisted programme, they were often focused on centrally-based civil servants and less on local-level capacity development. There is now greater appreciation of the need for systematic preparation, follow-up and assessment of the impact of training. This area continues to face challenges of cost-effectiveness and coordination, as well as difficulties posed by low levels of salaries among government workers which result in, as well as reflect, low public sector productivity.

9. Support to social policy reform, social mobilization and community capacity-building, through promotion of often innovative modes of participation, is taking on increased significance in sub-Saharan Africa within the context of rights-based programming (see the report on programming with a rights perspective (E/ICEF/1999/11) being submitted to the Executive Board at the present session). UNICEF is also increasingly providing assistance to initiatives that address legislative and policy issues related to children's and women's rights. Support to communication has been shifting from a centralized approach towards activities based on audience research, testing and feedback, with community and youth involvement.

10. Meanwhile, the escalating scope of armed conflict in parts of sub-Saharan Africa has often impeded access to children and women for the delivery of basic services and has created additional challenges of ensuring their protection against violence and abuse. Despite the difficulties, in the late 1990s, UNICEF managed to maintain a field-level presence in almost all countries in sub-Saharan Africa and to spearhead efforts for child protection, such as family tracing and reunification, the demobilization and reintegration of child combatants and the restoration of access to basic services, including education. Particularly in the late 1990s, UNICEF has spoken out internationally, at the highest levels, on major violations of children's rights arising from conflicts in Africa. Further in support of the recommendations of the Secretary-General's report on "The Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa" (A/52/871–S/1998/318), UNICEF has promoted children's rights and child protection issues with national leaders as a means of building commitment for peace. Country programmes in Angola, Burundi, Liberia and Mozambique have promoted community awareness of landmines and values of reconciliation in school curricula as part of a broadening range of activities to address the causes and consequences of recurrent conflict in Africa.

## II. Current threats and challenges to the rights of Africa's children

11. Large parts of Africa have seen setbacks in their development progress and prospects over the last two years. In many cases, the recovery in economic performance and gains in political stability noted in 1997 have proven fragile and vulnerable to both short-run shocks and structural factors. The stalling of progress is seen in the continued shortfalls in the achievement of the goals of the World Summit for Children and the intensifying threats to the realization of children's and women's rights.

12. The resurgence of armed conflict is having a corrosive effect on these human rights, as well as on the social and economic structures that must sustain them. With an estimated 7.2 million refugees and displaced people, Africa has experienced a growing number of international conflicts. The most extensive of these, in central Africa, has been joined by new conflicts in the Horn of the continent. Civil strife has also spread in coastal west Africa, while individual countries, most dramatically Angola and the Congo, have seen the revival of internal hostilities. Other countries have experienced political instability and widespread institutional weakness. These situations of turmoil have led to wasted resources, destroyed lives and shattered basic service systems.

13. A particular feature of several of these conflicts, such as that in Sierra Leone, has been the targeting of children, both as victims of abuse and for abduction as participants in conflict itself. Shocking manifestations of brutality have been witnessed as social structures have been undermined. Even societies not directly affected by conflict have witnessed growing levels of violence against women and children, particularly in poor urban settlements.

14. A different kind of crisis, greater even than war in its ultimate scope if not in immediate visibility, is that of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and its consequences. December 1998 estimates by the Joint and Co-sponsored United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) confirm that gains over the last three decades in child survival and life expectancy are being undone with unexpected rapidity. Some 83 per cent of all AIDS-related deaths globally have occurred in sub-Saharan Africa, about one quarter of them among children. Evidence of the startling impact of HIV/AIDS and of other adverse trends is accumulating. The

most recent Demographic and Health Survey in Kenya, for example, suggests that child mortality increased by about 40 per cent from the late 1980s to the mid-1990s and is continuing to worsen. In Zambia, the under-five mortality rate is estimated to have increased from 122 per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 202 in 1997. Meanwhile, particularly in parts of eastern and southern Africa, health services are overwhelmed with patients affected by AIDS-related conditions, while health workers, teachers and their families are also personally affected.

15. While the impact of AIDS may not have shown up clearly in macroeconomic statistics, this should not lead to complacency: the economic consequences of the pandemic for millions of individual families are catastrophic. The deaths of productive adults results in loss of basic income, the sale of household assets and often outright destitution. This greatly reduces the ability of families to contribute to realizing the rights of their children. Whether these effects widen existing disparities or not, their impact is to rapidly deepen the poverty of households and communities in large areas of the poorest region in the world.

16. Some parts of the continent, particularly in the common currency zone of west Africa, have seen a modest revival of economic prospects due to improved macroeconomic management. Medium-run prospects for recovery in west Africa may also be strengthened by the current democratization process in Nigeria, its largest nation. For many African countries, however, recent steep falls in world commodity prices are counteracting their improved policies. Very few of them have achieved the levels of investment necessary to transform the production and export base, and for rates of economic growth which will bring more jobs and better livelihoods. Following optimism in 1996, when continental gross domestic product growth was estimated at 4.5 per cent, the likelihood is that the growth of population once again outpaced that of income in 1998.

17. Meanwhile, over 8 million African children — the producers and entrepreneurs of the next decades — have already lost one or both parents to AIDS, and their numbers may grow to 10 million–14 million by the year 2001. Orphaned children and families affected by the loss of breadwinners constitute one of the greatest social welfare challenges in Africa's history. The social, psychological and cultural implications of the phenomenon of orphans in Africa have not yet been well understood. The safety nets required by affected children and families are, even in the best of cases, only partially in place.

18. A lack of open discourse on the stark challenge of the AIDS pandemic persists in many social settings, which hampers the search for decisive responses. There is some evidence that Governments have begun to increase their commitments to investing in basic services, including those related to AIDS awareness and response. However, these efforts continue to be undermined not only by low levels of efficiency in the use of resources, but also by the high proportions of national budgets devoted to debt repayment. Together with often sluggish revenue performance, and some increases in the share of military spending in the last two years, the continued burden of debt servicing reduces the scope for essential spending on children by African Governments.

19. It is not surprising, therefore, that progress in other areas of social and human development has also been limited. Considerable success has been registered since 1997 in some specific areas, including raising polio immunization rates, supported by the introduction by many countries of National Immunization Days; the wider use of vitamin A supplements, which are now received by about 60 per cent of young African children compared to one quarter in 1994; the widespread iodization of traded salt; and the dramatic reduction of guinea worm cases. These achievements now need to be sustained and extended to other key areas for human development. Maternal death rates in much of sub-Saharan Africa remain extraordinarily high, while about one third of young children are under weight for their age and one sixth have low weight at birth.

20. The risks of maternity continue to undermine the rights of African women to safe pregnancy and childbirth. This forms part of a broader set of factors which cause the systematic disadvantage of women, including: inferior social and often legal status; neglect in national policy; lack of political participation; illiteracy; excessive workload; poor nutrition; genital mutilation; early marriage and pregnancy; and unequal access to already limited services. Such factors also put younger women at disproportionate risk of HIV infection.

21. Sustained progress towards the goals of the World Summit for Children is likely to require both improvements in gender equity and a considerable strengthening of public institutions, complemented by community organization and partnerships with civil society. The current challenges are evident in other areas of basic services provision. Overall, less than two thirds of school-age children in sub-Saharan Africa are enrolled in primary education, a situation similar to that of 1990. Poor education quality, weak learning achievement and high drop-out rates are still major challenges despite efforts to adapt curricula, school

timetables and language policies to local needs. Meanwhile, the weakness of public health systems is illustrated by the resurgence, across the continent, of malaria and cholera, as well as the greater incidence of meningitis. These trends also reflect the persistent lack of access among the majority of families to safe water and sanitation, a problem which is rapidly intensifying in urban areas.

22. Inefficiencies in the use of public resources for social development are widely evident in the irregular payment of salaries, unreliable supplies of essential drugs and limited support capacities for the decentralized management of services. Despite those factors, the Bamako Initiative has had success in much of west Africa as well as in the Comoros, Madagascar and Mauritius as a strategy for revitalizing primary health care (PHC). A number of other countries have now initiated systemic reforms as a way of addressing these problems in social development. While positive results for children and women are yet to be realized, these sector-wide approaches may provide the starting point for building the capacity not only to address the needs of individual sectors, but to form wider partnerships for complex development challenges. Such partnerships will need to incorporate a vision of the role and responsibilities of the State in realizing the rights of citizens and meeting the needs of the most disadvantaged.

23. Sector-wide approaches, increased attention to public revenue raising and civil service reforms leading to improved pay and performance management are among the initiatives being taken by Governments to begin to address the structural factors that underlie the weaknesses of human development in Africa. International support is focusing increasingly on efforts to address such threats to children as malaria, unsafe water and HIV/AIDS. However, the key opportunities for a major revival of the prospects for Africa's new generations reside in the combined efforts of Governments and wider society. Such alliances, including for the sustained delivery of basic services and the protection of children and women, will need to be anchored in accountable relationships between the State and citizen's organizations, for which freedom of information and wider access to technology will be important conditions. It is in such areas that, despite setbacks in political reform and economic performance in the late-1990s, the prospects for Africa's recovery are possibly most encouraging.

# III. UNICEF response: maintaining priority for Africa

24. During the decade of the 1990s, UNICEF has responded to the organizational priority for Africa by strengthening its deployment of key resources. Staff numbers in sub-Saharan Africa rose rapidly after 1990 and peaked in 1995 at 42 per cent of total staff. In 1998, some 2,620 UNICEF staff were working in sub-Saharan Africa, compared to a total of 1,535 in 1990. The numbers in 1998 comprised 37 per cent of all UNICEF staff, compared to 32 per cent at the beginning of the decade. In 1998, these numbers included 28 per cent of the organization's international Professional staff, 40 per cent of the national officers and 38 per cent of the General Service staff.

25. Under the modified system for allocation of available general resources approved in 1997 (E/ICEF/1997/12/Rev.1, decision 1997/18), the share of the two sub-Saharan Africa regions in total general resources allocated to country programmes rose to 40.2 per cent in 1999, and is projected to increase further to 45.8 per cent by 2002. This compares with an average of 37 per cent of general resources in the period 1990–1998, with significant fluctuations throughout that period. The revised formula will place general resources allocations to Africa on a more consistent, as well as rising, basis.

26. In the first annual allocation of the 7 per cent of available general resources for programmes set aside for special allocation by the Executive Director, as per Executive Board decision 1997/18, the focus on Africa as the region of greatest need and priority was further reinforced. Some 65 per cent of the allocation from the set-aside was directed to programmes in sub-Saharan African countries, particularly for accelerated efforts in immunization, control of HIV/AIDS and malaria, and guinea worm eradication.

27. In agreement with funding partners, during 1997-1999, supplementary funds were allocated on a multi-country basis for a range of priority areas in sub-Saharan Africa, including for the eradication of guinea worm and polio, the elimination of iodine deficiencies, girls' education and the reduction of child labour. However, the direct availability of supplementary funds for country programme budgets approved by the Executive Board remains highly uneven among countries, and among programme areas within overall country cooperation.

## A. UNICEF programme priorities in sub-Saharan Africa

28. The two UNICEF regions in sub-Saharan Africa have established clear sets of overall priorities for UNICEF work, within the scope and period of the current MTP. These have emerged from the reality of the trends affecting children and their rights at the country level, and will be adopted, in appropriate ways, through the country programming process in a majority of cases in each region. They will be the subject of intensive regional efforts, including resource allocation, multi-country fund-raising, regional office technical support, evaluation and monitoring. These regional priorities are intended to respond to the complex challenges for children's and women's rights in sub-Saharan Africa in a strategic manner, taking into account the most urgent needs, the underlying causes and UNICEF comparative advantage. This will continue to be based on an analysis of the factors affecting the realization of children's and women's rights, and of priority actions, in each country context.

29. In west and central Africa, the highest regional priority is given to the survival of children and improvements in child and maternal health, centred around the strategy of the Bamako Initiative for the revitalization of health systems and community participation. Immunization, vitamin A supplementation, safe motherhood, guinea worm eradication and local participation activities are major components of the Initiative. Regional strategies have been developed for the reduction of maternal and neonatal mortality, and will be supported in some 13 countries in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Population Fund if supplementary funding is secured. Activities for improved emergency obstetric care have been piloted in six countries. Advocacy, in alliance with national media, will promote increased commitment to maternal and child mortality reduction across the region.

30. The second major priority in west and central Africa will be the continuation of efforts to improve access to good quality basic education, especially for girls. Major achievements have been registered in specific areas in individual countries, such as the training of teachers, the establishment of school committees, textbook revision and provision, incentive schemes for the recruitment of female teachers, the training of educators on gender issues, social mobilization and policy development. These will be built upon and extended, with support from funding partners, and further attention will be given to improving quality and reducing drop-out rates. Innovative and non-formal methods of extending education opportunities will be sought, often as a bridge to formal systems. Work in these areas will be pursued throughout sub-Saharan Africa as part of the African Girls Education Initiative.

31. In eastern and southern Africa, many country programmes are now being reoriented to give highest priority to meeting the challenge of controlling HIV/AIDS, as a primary threat to securing human rights, and to assisting children and women affected both directly and indirectly. The second area of major priority in this region will be intensified efforts by UNICEF to support Governments and other stakeholders in the control of malaria as part of the "Roll Back Malaria" alliance of international partners. Each of these priority areas will provide close links to the reduction of maternal deaths.

32. Bringing the HIV/AIDS pandemic under control will be essential to the effectiveness of other key interventions for disease control, the reduction of malnutrition, and securing rights to basic education and protection. Based on an assessment of the impact of HIV/AIDS on children and of UNICEF comparative advantage within the framework of the UNAIDS alliance and country-level United Nations theme groups, the organization will focus its efforts in sub-Saharan Africa in five areas: prevention of HIV transmission among young people through broadly-based mobilization, communication and life skills education efforts in school and community settings; reduction of transmission from mothers to babies involving, in about a dozen countries, the provision of a minimum package of services to pregnant women, including voluntary and confidential counselling and testing, access to short-course drugs and support for informed choices in infant feeding; high-level advocacy for political action, including the mobilization of mass media, the dissemination of available data, contacts with policy makers and alliances with UNAIDS partners; advocacy and, where necessary, technical support for public safety nets and community-led programmes to ensure care and guaranteed access to basic services for orphans and children living in families affected by HIV/AIDS; and assistance to UNICEF staff members themselves through information, counselling and other forms of support.

33. Efforts in these areas were intensified in eastern and southern Africa and parts of west and central Africa in late 1998 with the preparation of pilot initiatives to reduce mother-to-child transmission of HIV in several countries with the support of funds from the United Nations Foundation. At the regional level, funds will be sought to support the acceleration of HIV/AIDS education in schools and to assess options for replacement feeding linked to the reduction of mother-to-child transmission. Efforts will be made to engage religious, private sector and regional

organizations in actions to address the pandemic. Training in the design of programme interventions and advocacy to meet the challenge of HIV/AIDS will be held during 1999 for UNICEF senior staff in Africa.

34. It is fully recognized that HIV/AIDS, like malaria, is a problem directly threatening children's rights, which requires solutions based in processes of social change as well as in science and technical interventions. These processes will need to involve community-level analysis of the problem and will require the mobilization of facilitators and capacity-building for local action. The approach to external support in these areas will not be standard, and its design will need to carefully reflect and respond to local needs and perceptions.

35. With regard to the control of malaria, there is a more proven range of potential community-based actions, although the complexity of putting them in place on a sustained basis must also not be underestimated. Actions in eastern and southern Africa, for which further resources are being sought, include: the supply of impregnated bednets; building systems for bednet distribution and re-treatment; the training of health workers for improved case management; the study of drug resistance; and support to policy development and community mobilization. In west and central Africa, improved case management and community actions for malaria control will be supported under the Bamako Initiative.

36. A further priority for UNICEF in all parts of Africa will be to fully integrate preparedness and response to situations of instability and crisis in the regular country programming process. This is already being pursued in countries such as Burundi, Liberia and Somalia. Over the next few years, efforts for integration will include capacity-building among UNICEF staff to be able to meet a set of core organizational commitments in conditions of conflict to support the rights of children and women to basic services and protection.

37. Further support and advocacy will be needed for the demobilization and return to families and schools of child soldiers, and to raise awareness of the dangers of landmines and the trade in small arms. Support during and after conflict will continue to be provided for the care and counselling of unaccompanied children; family tracing and reunification; and the restoration of basic services, including education. UNICEF will remain active in all these areas, but its actions in response to crisis will need to be more predictable and systematic. They will also need to form part of longer-run efforts, within regular programme cooperation, to assist countries in restoring the social fabric, where this has been torn by conflict; to improve emergency assessment and preparedness planning; and to promote attitudes, practices and social institutions which recognize and protect the rights of children and women in all situations. Further areas in which these approaches will be needed include the prevention of child trafficking, drug abuse among young people and exploitative child labour. More broadly, UNICEF will seek to promote the respect of children's rights as a lever for building a stronger ethic for peace and reconciliation in societies recovering from the trauma of war.

38. Among the other programme priorities which form part of the MTP, attention will be given to the piloting of integrated approaches to the management of childhood illnesses in some 20 countries in sub-Saharan Africa. This will include health system interventions, communication for improved home care, case management training and planning for the availability of essential drugs. Linked to this, pilot efforts will be made to improve home and community care practices for the survival, growth and development of very young children in selected countries, including the Côte d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Malawi and Namibia, and partnerships will be extended in this area with the World Bank. Sustaining immunization coverage, vitamin A supplementation in high-risk areas and the consumption of iodized salt, as well as support to breastfeeding and the reduction of maternal mortality, will all receive widespread support through country programmes. The Vaccine Independence Initiative, which has had some success in achieving a more sustained supply of vaccines in the Sahel, will be gradually extended. In the short-term, priority will also need to be given to measles control, polio eradication and the replacement of depreciated cold-chain equipment. In water and sanitation, the focus of UNICEF cooperation will continue to shift to support of improved hygiene practices, the testing of lower-cost technologies, the development of policies and partnerships, promoting the participation of women in community-based maintenance systems, and ensuring clean water and sanitation facilities in schools and health units. The challenging drive for guinea worm eradication will be continued, in close partnership with WHO, the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Global 2000 of the Carter Center.

39. UNICEF also will place increased emphasis on identifying the causes of major forms of violence against children and women, including female genital mutilation, and working with civic and women's groups, religious and community leaders to find solutions. Efforts to establish and improve laws, administrative codes and the work of institutions dealing with children's rights, including juvenile justice systems, will expand. Assistance to national partners

in assessing progress in implementing the articles and applying the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women will be provided in appropriate forms in almost all African countries. UNICEF will also play a partnership role, as part of the concerned group of all United Nations agencies, in supporting national actions in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.

## B. Strategies and operational support for programme priorities in Africa

40. In support of these priorities in sub-Saharan Africa, and for other areas of priority within individual country programmes, UNICEF will develop, promote and utilize a combination of strategies. Drawing on experience from the 1990s, these will be based explicitly on a human rights perspective to cooperation and will stress the recognition of people who are poor, including children, as the key actors in their own development. Emphasis will be given to capacity- building, to enable and encourage communities to assess, analyse and take action, supported by Governments, in order to: reverse the AIDS pandemic; address its consequences; roll back malaria in the village or urban neighbourhood; and help secure good quality basic health services, primary education, clean water, environmental care and child protection.

41. These strategies of support will call for the construction of a broader range of effective partnerships among local, civil society, private, non-government and women's organizations, in alliance with government agencies. Work with district and municipal authorities has also been a successful strategy for child-focused programming, and will be continued. UNICEF will complement these local-level efforts through advocacy, analysis, social mobilization and, where necessary, support to national policy development, including in the context of sector-wide approaches. These activities will aim to create a more enabling and often less discriminatory social, legal and institutional environment for children and women within which community initiatives can take place.

42. With the limited resources available, and with major challenges ahead for the realization of rights to basic services, cost-effective approaches will need to be pursued in all areas of intervention. UNICEF regional offices and management teams in Africa, as elsewhere, will have a key role to play in the identification and verification of such approaches through such mechanisms as budget reviews and programme evaluations. The dissemination of promising experiences, and support to African countries and regional partners in gaining access to key sources of information and expertise on policy development for children, will be a further key role of UNICEF. Regional training activities for UNICEF staff will place increased emphasis on integrated planning approaches and the strategic role of operations functions in support of programme priorities. Greater sharing of technical expertise and administrative capacity among UNICEF offices in Africa, and with United Nations partners, is now taking place. Programme quality monitoring systems have been introduced in both regions in sub-Saharan Africa, and a procurement unit has been established in South Africa.

43. Monitoring of progress in key areas of outcome for Africa's children will take place through a series of end-decade surveys. In some cases, they will form part of wider national household survey exercises. In other cases, a second round of multiple indicator cluster surveys (MICS) is likely to be needed. In a number of sub-Saharan African countries lacking national data collection systems, these surveys, held initially at the mid-decade, provide virtually the sole source of social and household information. Additional indicators will be built into the new series of MICS, to be held in 1999-2000, to reflect new priorities and opportunities. In addition, a goal against which progress in the fight against HIV/AIDS can be readily measured will be established, possibly relating to the reduction of new infections among teenage girls.

44. Research and evaluation priorities for UNICEF in sub-Saharan Africa will also reflect the major priorities. Many of these will be pursued through periodic situation assessment and analysis of children's and women's rights, and in the context of MTRs. In particular, studies of knowledge, attitudes and practices regarding the causes and treatment of malaria will be extended following the striking results of the study in Zanzibar (reported to the Executive Board in document E/ICEF/1998/P/L.1). In collaboration with WHO, support will be given to training for controlled trials on decision-making for the use of anti-malarial drugs. Meanwhile, an evaluation will be held in 1999 of the regional Sara Communication Initiative, which incorporates support for AIDS awareness among older children.

# IV. Strengthening partnerships and responsibility for children's rights in Africa

## A. UNICEF partnerships

45. As discussed throughout the present report, effectiveness in partnerships will be an essential aspect of short-term and sustainable development outcomes for Africa's children, both as a means of maximizing resources and to strengthen the platform for coordinated action. The UNICEF contribution to renewed human development in Africa has been pursued through a combination of partnerships anchored in country programmes of cooperation and alliances based around key issues for global and regional advocacy, such as the banning of landmines, the elimination of exploitative child labour, the reduction of violence against women, and the prioritization of donor and government budgets towards basic services. This approach will be continued with national partners, global allies and African regional organizations, such as OAU and the Federation of African Women Educationalists, as well as with the Save the Children Alliance, particularly on issues related to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and with the Inter-African Committee on the Elimination of Harmful Traditional Practices on the issue of violence against women and girls.

46. The deteriorating socio-economic situation of the continent has been a constant preoccupation for the United Nations in recent years. Initiatives to address this, in which UNICEF has participated, have included the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development and its successor, the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s. UNICEF continues to cooperate with the World Bank, WHO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Development Programme and others in key areas of activity of the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa, launched in 1996. Efforts in basic education, for example, aim to concentrate inter-agency efforts to help improve the situation of 16 sub-Saharan African countries with very low primary school enrolment rates through the development of sector investment programmes. UNICEF is working closely with UNESCO and the World Bank in this initiative for Low Enrolment Countries and is providing advice to the design process, including for components related to the education of girls. African leadership of the Special Initiative on Africa has been registered by the adoption by ministers of health of the framework for health sector reform, and by education ministers through the Association for the Development of Education in Africa. However, the Initiative is constrained by weaknesses in country-level implementation and the lack of additional resources. Recent efforts by coalitions of international agencies, including UNICEF, to generate support for accelerated efforts by African countries to combat HIV/AIDS and malaria are expected to provide new impetus. The increasing adoption of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and related mechanisms, such as United Nations country theme groups, will support the effective collaboration of United Nations agencies for children's and women's rights and in priority areas for action such as these.

47. There are promising signs that bilateral aid donors may be increasing the priority given to Africa, creating further opportunities for partnerships. Emerging trends also suggest that more emphasis will be placed by both bilateral and multilateral agencies on longer-term and multisectoral as well as sector-wide approaches, and on interventions that assist countries in building capacity for sustained access to basic services among families which are poor and marginalized. These trends will create further opportunities for UNICEF to provide value-added in the social development process based, for example, on its experience in support of participatory, community-led approaches and its cross-sectoral focus on the survival and growth of children.

48. UNICEF has found a particular convergence of concerns with OAU on the anti-war agenda and issues of conflict resolution and humanitarian assistance directly relevant to children and women. This partnership has provided important opportunities for advocacy, particularly with African Heads of State at their annual summits. Following the adoption of an OAU resolution on the use of landmines in Africa in 1998, UNICEF advised on a campaign for a total ban on landmines in Africa and advocated for ratification of the Ottawa convention in a number of countries. OAU also passed in 1998 a resolution banning the use of children as soldiers, while collaboration with OAU enabled the relaxation of access restrictions for essential humanitarian supplies during the imposition of sanctions on Burundi. UNICEF contributed to the drafting of the plan of action for the African Decade for Education, launched by OAU in 1997, and will support its implementation. UNICEF is also giving increased priority to promoting the wider ratification of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. Meanwhile, work has continued with the Economic Commission for Africa in the

production of a series of analyses of social development trends in Africa. Cooperation with specific sectors of the Southern African Development Community has also been increased through support to policy design and capacity development in HIV/AIDS, sanitation and hygiene. Regular consultations with the African Development Bank (AfDB), and collaboration with AfDB-funded projects, such as in the health sector in Senegal, will be continued.

## B. African leadership for children's rights

49. The strengthening of national administrative structures for the delivery of basic services will be a key element of development progress in many countries of sub-Saharan Africa. An end to conflict, accountable political systems, a fair and functioning judiciary, open debate on policies and high levels of participation of women and civil society will further support sustained economic growth and broad-based human development. They will also provide a basis for more effective action against the HIV/AIDS pandemic and its corrosive effects on children's rights. Responsibility will rest primarily with African leaders, Governments and civil society to work towards such conditions.

50. Over the last few decades, African countries which have given priority and consistent attention to investing in human development have tended to see the benefits of increased economic growth and, where these measures have been sustained, falling levels of household poverty. Recent reforms of health and education systems in countries such as Ethiopia, Ghana and Zambia, and initiatives to rapidly expand access to primary education in Malawi and Uganda, hold the promise of improved care, learning achievement and human development outcomes. Major efforts for awareness-raising and public education on HIV/AIDS have begun to make an impact in Uganda. However, such approaches are not yet sufficiently widespread in sub-Saharan Africa. The more general pattern remains that of declining levels of investment in basic services, with often dramatic shortages of funding at district and municipal levels.

51. The responsibilities adopted by State Parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child are now widely recognized and understood. It seems not unreasonable to suggest that a lack, in many countries, of public action to address major shortfalls in the rights of children, such as the absence of primary school places and of protection from violence, and the failure to openly confront threats to life such as HIV/AIDS, are indications of inadequate political commitment to the realization of these rights. Furthermore, without a norm of peace and freedom from conflict, guaranteed by political will and underpinned by regional cooperation, the basis will not fully exist for ensuring that children's rights are protected and fulfilled.

52. None the less, Government and civil society in a number of countries are now working together to place greater emphasis on children's and women's rights. This has been reflected in the introduction of measures to combat female genital mutilation, new provisions on violence against women, increased attention to girls' education and revisions of the constitution or legal code. Recent children's acts adopted in several countries in sub-Saharan Africa have increased the legal age of responsibility of children and provided them with protective measures through juvenile courts. Enshrining the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women in a comprehensive legal framework, combined with measures to improve the quality of, and access to education and health services, will provide a key part of the foundation for the realization of human rights.

## C. Africa's partners in development

53. Although the central task of Africa's development rests primarily with its people and leaders, the international community bears a responsibility both to support the continent in its development efforts and to remove obstacles in the way of progress. With a changing focus which places greater emphasis on good government and stability, the potential exists for those countries which are reforming their political and social systems to achieve sustained growth with widespread benefits. For this to happen, Africa's partners must renew their support to the region and improve the global conditions for its development.

54. A first component of this renewed support must be a reversal in the decline in official development assistance (ODA). As a proportion of the output of industrialized countries, ODA now stands at less than one third of the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product. The absolute amount of assistance has declined as well — by nearly 5 per cent per year since 1992. At a time when more sub-Saharan African countries are taking reform initiatives, opportunities are being missed for effective international support to this process.

55. Linked to the amount of ODA are the targeting and composition of assistance. The access of all people to basic education opportunities, health services and safe water is recognized as not only key to sustained human development and poverty alleviation, but, increasingly, as a normative

issue of human rights. Investment in such services is central to reducing the worst manifestations of poverty and breaking its vicious, inter-generational cycle. The 20/20 Initiative, agreed at the World Summit for Social Development in 1995, provides a framework for translating this need for increased resources into reality. With commitment and better targeting, including to strategies for national and local capacity-building, the contribution by both Governments and international partners to basic services could increase substantially in Africa.

56. Increasing ODA and targeting it better will be of limited benefit, however, if African countries continue to be saddled with large debt burdens. For every dollar that sub-Saharan Africa received in ODA in 1996, it paid out $1.31 in debt service. The external debt of African countries rose from $340 billion in 1996 to $349 billion in 1997, representing more than 200 per cent of annual exports. Spending on debt servicing is higher than that on basic services in a number of African countries, often by a wide margin. An example is Zambia, where average annual spending on education amounted to $82 million between 1993–1996 compared to some $335 million per year in debt payments.

57. A further component of renewed support to sub-Saharan Africa is to enable resources freed by debt relief to be allocated in favour of basic education, PHC, safe water and other poverty alleviation measures. The Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative, developed under the auspices of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, aims to achieve sustainable levels of debt service by providing relief not only of the bilateral debt burden, but also of debt owed to international financial institutions. Two years after the launch of the initiative, however, only Uganda has actually benefited from relief. IMF and the World Bank recently decided to extend the HIPC initiative and to ease the criteria for inclusion. There remains an urgent need for these measures to be extended by granting deeper and earlier relief and to free additional national resources for human development. Support to local efforts to address the HIV/AIDS pandemic would be a priority use of such funds.

58. Africa's share of world trade continues to decline, shrinking to 1.9 per cent in 1997, reinforcing the continent's marginalization in the global economy. Although past experience has not been encouraging, renewed efforts are needed to diversify African economies, and both Governments and their international partners have important roles to play. Improving market access for Africa's exports and investing in business skills and access to information technology among students are relevant areas, which could involve the local private sector.

59. While the resolution of the conflicts affecting Africa is the primary responsibility of African leaders, the international community should not ignore the plight of millions of refugees and displaced people and the moral issues posed by suffering and insecurity on the continent. Political reform efforts can be facilitated through the building of experience among parliamentarians, civil servants, civic leaders, soldiers and police, including for practical measures to safeguard the rights of both children and women. The international community can assist with technical expertise and funds to encourage the development of democratic institutions, as seen in Mozambique and Namibia. The international ban on landmines needs to be fully enforced, while the proliferation of weapons needs to be stemmed and small arms everywhere kept out of the hands of children.

60. Lastly, the lessons of past experience, the trends towards sector-wide and more integrated approaches to development assistance, and the existence of a series of ratified international human rights conventions and world summit declarations from the 1990s place a responsibility on all development partners, including UNICEF, to achieve well coordinated efforts in support of the priorities and urgent needs of African countries. There is a greater potential for success when Government and partners have formed consensus on priorities, the strategies to address them and the most effective roles of different partners. The major areas of threat to the rights of African children and women described in the present report, including HIV/AIDS, malaria, conflict and the persistent weakness of public health and basic education systems, provide critical tests for effective and responsible partnerships in the years ahead.

## V. Conclusion

61. The priority areas identified and being pursued for UNICEF work in sub-Saharan Africa in the period of the current MTP also provide a link to the proposed new agenda for children in the next decade, which will be based on human rights principles (see E/ICEF/1999/10 being submitted to the Executive Board at the present session). Conflict and insecurity, the weaknesses of institutions, low access to basic services, and the dramatic challenges of HIV/AIDS and malaria pose the greatest current threats to children's and women's rights and well-being. In many countries and local contexts, the greatest priority actions for UNICEF and partners will be, for the foreseeable future, to

ensure children's and women's survival. Conflict and HIV/AIDS are factors that intensify that priority for action, while making it clear that sustained improvements will only be achieved through strategies which address the deeper causes of childhood and maternal deaths and disadvantage.

62. At the same time, the basis for future recovery and sustained development must be laid through intensified and more effective efforts, by a dynamic range of partners, to invest in the capabilities of Africa's children. The priority given by UNICEF in Africa will be to support: the strengthening of basic health care systems for child and maternal survival; the access of all children, especially girls, to good quality basic education and learning opportunities; the strengthening of community capacity and practices for the protection of women and children; the promotion of non-violence, gender equity and post-conflict recovery; and the identification of viable approaches to improved family and community care for the survival and development of young children, including those affected by HIV/AIDS. All these provide building blocks for Africa's participation in a new era based on ethical principles and responsible partnerships, which place the rights of children and women first.

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*For information*

## Progress report on mainstreaming gender in UNICEF

*Summary*

The present report presents the progress achieved in integrating gender as a cross-cutting concern in UNICEF country programmes. It analyses achievements and identifies areas necessary for strengthening programme guidance, quality assurance and organizational mechanisms for supporting and monitoring the mainstreaming of gender in the work of UNICEF.

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# I. Introduction

1. In the evolution of the UNICEF policy on the advancement of women, the policy on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, approved by the Executive Board in 1994 (E/ICEF/1994/13/Rev.1, decision 1994/A/4), is significant. It calls for a shift from the "women in development" approach to the "gender" approach. This approach recognizes the structural inequality that exists between men and women and boys and girls, and implies the implementation of actions to address the underlying causes which perpetuate the disparities that women and girls face in the enjoyment of rights throughout their lives.

2. The policy recommends the integration of gender concerns as a cross-cutting theme in country programmes and the promotion of gender equality in national development programmes by adopting a life-cycle perspective, giving special attention to the girl child. This includes attention to gender-specific goals as part of the achievement of the goals of the World Summit for Children. It identifies priority areas for action for girls and women within the life-cycle perspective and the frameworks of the Convention of the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. The policy also calls for the establishment of organizational mechanisms for implementing the recommended actions.

3. The World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children, adopted at the World Summit for Children, contains many specific references to women and girls and singles out the girl child for special attention. Eleven of the Summit goals relate explicitly to the special needs of girls and women. The mid-decade review of progress towards the Summit goals (A/51/256) and the annual reports to the Executive Board on follow-up to the Summit have emphasized, *inter alia*, the need to adopt gender-sensitive approaches to girls' education, maternal mortality reduction and the elimination of gender disparities in the monitoring of national achievements.

4. This overall framework is strengthened by the joint responsibility of UNICEF and other agencies for follow-up to the global conferences. In relation to gender, the International Conference on Population and Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women are of special importance. The Executive Board approved measures for UNICEF follow-up to these conferences in 1995 (E/ICEF/1995/9/Rev.1, decision 1995/29) and 1996 (E/ICEF/1996/12/Rev.1, decision 1996/3), respectively. Priority areas identified for follow-up by UNICEF were girls' education; the health of girls and women, including adolescents; children's and women's rights; and strengthening partnerships for advocacy and action on the girl child and women's empowerment.

5. The goals of gender equality were reaffirmed in the UNICEF mission statement, which states, *inter alia*, that "UNICEF aims, through its country programmes, to promote the equal rights of women and girls and to support their full participation in the political, social and economic development of their communities". The Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the most pertinent human rights instruments for children and women, provide the essential framework for the mandate and mission of UNICEF. The principles of non-discrimination and universality are central to the rights approach and strengthen programming for gender equality, since they require integrating attention to gender issues into social and economic policy and legislation.

6. Within this framework, the agreed conclusions of the Economic and Social Council on mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system, adopted by the Council in 1997 (A/52/3, chapter IV), provide new opportunities. They have served to reinforce UNICEF efforts in the operationalization of its gender equality goals and to strengthen country-level, inter-agency collaboration to integrate gender concerns in country programmes of cooperation.

7. UNICEF has recorded significant advances in mainstreaming attention to gender issues in all of its work. The secretariat has reported on progress to the Executive Board in the annual reports of the Executive Director, the progress reports on follow-up to the World Summit for Children and other global conferences and in other programme documents, including country programme recommendations (CPRs). The present report supplements the information provided in those documents and in other reports being considered at the Board's 1999 annual session. The report discusses the progress achieved in integrating gender as a cross-cutting concern in UNICEF country programmes. It also analyses achievements and identifies areas for action to strengthen programme guidance, ensure quality and improve organizational mechanisms for supporting and monitoring the mainstreaming of gender in the work of UNICEF.

# II. Mainstreaming gender in the country programme

## A. The development and application of tools

8. In adopting the Women's Equality and Empowerment Framework in 1993, UNICEF was among the first organizations in the United Nations system to identify an operational tool for mainstreaming gender that is appropriate to its mandate and work. The Framework postulates that inequality needs to be addressed at five levels: (a) welfare; (b) access to resources; (c) awareness-raising; (d) participation in decision-making; and (e) control over resources and actions for social, economic and political development. This analysis becomes the basis for setting goals, formulating strategies and developing indicators for monitoring and evaluation.

9. In 1996, of the 40 country notes and subsequent CPRs submitted to the Executive Board, 33 included gender equality as a goal as well as specific actions to support the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. The children's and women's rights framework is evident in several of the CPRs approved by the Executive Board in 1997 and 1998, for example those for Ecuador, India and Mali.

10. Actions for mainstreaming gender in the sectoral areas of health, nutrition, education, water and sanitation and emergencies, and in partnerships and participation in political life, are addressed at two levels: (a) the development of programme policies and programme guidance materials at headquarters; and (b) support to practical interventions in country programmes.

11. The UNICEF strategies for water and environmental sanitation, basic education, health and children in need of special protection emphasize the integration of gender concerns. This is reflected in such programme guidance materials as the manual on mainstreaming gender in water and sanitation; guidelines for mainstreaming the girls' education initiative; guidelines for safe motherhood and maternal and neonatal survival; the notebook on youth health and development; and resource materials on gender issues specific to emergency situations.

12. While the lack of data disaggragated by age and sex and the limited analysis of the social factors that determine gender relations have affected the full mainstreaming in country programmes, practical interventions in the areas of health, nutrition, education and water and sanitation increasingly give attention to improving the access and quality of services to girls and women, increasing women's participation in the management of services and special measures to protect the rights of girls and women. The report on progress and challenges in achieving universal basic education being considered at the Executive Board's 1999 annual session (E/ICEF/1999/14), discusses the actions taken to increase girls' enrolment and retention in primary education. In other sectors, examples include "women-friendly" health services in Bangladesh and Peru; the youth career development programme for girls at risk of sexual exploitation in Thailand; literacy programmes for indigenous women in Bolivia and Mexico; peer education programmes for adolescents in Namibia, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe; programmes for women's participation in water management committees in Honduras and Nigeria; and integrated programmes for income generation, literacy and child care in China, Egypt, Indonesia, Senegal, the Sudan, Togo and Viet Nam.

## B. Support to building capacities for mainstreaming gender

13. Capacity-building for staff and counterparts has been identified as a major strategy for mainstreaming gender. Since 1993, there have been special efforts, both at headquarters and by regional and country offices, for:

(a) The development of a gender training package and programme guidance materials for gender mainstreaming;

(b) The designation of staff members in regional and country offices to serve as gender focal points, providing them with necessary competence;

(c) The training of more than 1,250 staff and 9,500 national counterparts in some 275 workshops. This has included the training of peacekeepers and management personnel to protect and advance the rights of girls and women and promote behavioural change and communication for gender equality in emergency situations.

14. Periodic desk reviews of the capacity-building programme have been undertaken to make mid-course corrections and respond to emerging needs. These reviews indicate that gender training has proven effective in ensuring greater attention to gender concerns in the country programme process and in promoting actions for mainstreaming gender in national development polices and programmes. However, there are still gaps in implementation. In their assessment of capacity-building

efforts, the reviews concluded that there were difficulties in translating training into concrete follow-up actions to mainstream gender as a cross-cutting theme in the country programme, owing to lack of disaggregated data systems, inconsistent support and the lack of appropriate tools and monitoring mechanisms.

15. Gender focal point networks have been established in all regions, with the internal network currently comprising 95 gender focal points. Regional networks meet at least once a year to identify priorities. The Gender, Partnership and Participation Section of Programme Division provides technical support and policy guidance to the regional networks. Annual meetings of gender focal points review programme experiences, share and review new opportunities and define emerging areas for joint action in advancing the gender goals.

16. The promotion of regional and national capacities for gender mainstreaming takes place mainly through support to national institutions, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community groups, the development of technical networks of trainers and gender experts, the adaptation of the training package to local needs and the preparation of special materials. Some examples include the establishment of gender training networks in Ethiopia and the United Republic of Tanzania; the development, production and dissemination of a multimedia gender training module in the Middle East and North Africa region in both English and Arabic; gender modules for use in community-based programmes in Haiti; the training of male and female municipal personnel in Nicaragua; the orientation of male and female representatives in local councils in India and Uganda; the establishment of a core group of male gender trainers in South Africa; and gender sensitization of male and female teachers and administrators in educational systems in the Gambia, Guinea and other countries in West Africa.

17. The 1997 desk review of the capacity-building programme showed that while gender training is the strongest mechanism for building capacity, the challenge was to follow-up the training with tools to support translation of the concepts to practical actions in the country programme. The mid-term reviews of the country programmes in Ethiopia, Uganda and Zimbabwe also indicated the need for tools and programme guidance to assist practical implementation.

18. Following the Secretary-General's call, in October 1997, for the entire United Nations system to mainstream gender in all programmes and to provide practical guidance for operational mainstreaming of gender issues, UNICEF prepared a programmer's handbook. The handbook outlines steps to be taken to ensure that gender is mainstreamed at the different stages of the country programme, using the rights perspective and in accordance with the Economic and Social Council's agreed conclusions on gender. The draft version will be tested in selected countries during 1999 and 2000.

19. The documentation of best practices in gender mainstreaming and the building of networks for knowledge acquisition and exchange has supported capacity-building efforts. Based on experiences of country programmes, a set of 20 best practices in gender mainstreaming and special initiatives for women and girls has been completed. These documents will be distributed widely within UNICEF and shared with national counterparts and the United Nations system as resources for strengthening gender mainstreaming efforts.

## C. Regional and country initiatives in gender mainstreaming

20. Implementation of national plans for follow-up to the World Summit for Children, the International Conference on Population and Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women has created new opportunities for strengthening regional and country initiatives for girls and women in the promotion of women's and children's rights. The report on follow-up to the World Summit for Children that is under discussion at the 1999 annual session (E/ICEF/1999/9) discusses progress in the reduction of gender disparities and the outcome of actions taken to integrate gender issues in the achievement of the Summit goals at regional levels.

21. UNICEF is closely involved with the United Nations inter-agency campaigns around the issue of violence against women and girls in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean and South Asia. Lessons learned in South Asia in involving men in seeking solutions to violence currently are being documented. The "Meena" and "Sara" initiatives in South Asia and Africa are popular with girls and aim both to empower them with knowledge about their rights and to change community attitudes. A regional programme for the elimination of female genital mutilation in Eastern and Southern Africa is underway in Kenya, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Somalia and in many countries in West Africa, including Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali and Senegal. UNICEF has supported the efforts of Governments and the Inter-African Committee on Ending Harmful Practices and other NGOs in mobilizing support for the Organization of African Unity

(OAU) Declaration on Violence Against Women, adopted at the OAU Summit in June 1998. A proposal for a regional information network on girls in Latin America emerged from a regional seminar on the equal rights of girls, which was organized by the Government of Mexico and UNICEF.

22. Many UNICEF country programmes go beyond the issues of girls' and women's access to and utilization of services, as in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria, Nicaragua, Peru, the Philippines, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Viet Nam. The advances are reflected in multisectoral initiatives for addressing violence against girls and women, legal literacy, women's participation and leadership and support to national machineries for the integration of gender in national development plans and legal reform. Studies on the situation of girls have resulted in the development and implementation of national programmes delaying the age of marriage and early pregnancy, and the protection of girls from violence, sexual and economic exploitation. While there have been advances, there are also growing demands for action around these issues.

23. The development and establishment of systems for the collection and analysis of data disaggregated by sex, age and location are priority concerns in most country programmes. The mid-decade review of progress towards the World Summit for Children goals resulted in the development of benchmarks from the multiple indicator cluster surveys and other surveys carried out in many countries during 1995. They have provided the foundation for the development of national data systems on children and women in such countries as Bangladesh, China, Egypt, Peru and Zambia. These data systems have proven valuable in the preparation of country programmes and in tracking gender mainstreaming at national and subnational levels. The ongoing work of the Education For All 2000 Assessment, which demands gender disaggregation of data, is an important step in education that is supported by UNICEF and the four other partners from the World Conference on Education for All.

### D. Partnerships to support gender mainstreaming

24. The evolution of an International Network for Girls' Rights, with a membership of 600 organizations, has been a positive development in expanding the partnerships of the Working Group on Girls of the NGO Committee on UNICEF. In the area of children's and women's rights, there are several initiatives aimed at alliance-building among Governments, NGOs, activists and treaty bodies around the common issues of health, education, participation, discrimination in family law and inheritance and violence in families. In Bolivia, Costa Rica, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Malawi, Mauritius, the Philippines, Nepal, Senegal and other countries, these initiatives have created new opportunities for dialogue on women's and girls' rights within the community and in social policy arenas for bringing about change. Further, the forging of linkages between community-based organizations and national bodies are crucial in providing strategic support to the implementation and monitoring of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

## III. Opportunities and challenges

### A. Emerging issues

25. At its 1999 annual session, the Executive Board is also considering a report on the goals and strategies for children beyond 2000 (E/ICEF/1999/10). For drafting that report, the secretariat prepared a background paper on gender equality and the rights of women and girls, in order to strengthen programming approaches that create an enabling environment for rights and overcome the barriers that women and girls encounter in their daily lives. The background paper stresses that the gender dimension of socialization, behavioural development and change, interpersonal relationships and attitudes, in childhood and adulthood, will need further elaboration for practical translation in the areas of early childhood care for growth, survival and development, basic education, adolescent development and other priorities of the medium-term plan for the period 1998–2001 (E/ICEF/1998/13 and Corr.1).

26. Lessons learned from the better parenting programme in the Caribbean region should be used to support the development of programme content and methodologies for orienting parents on gender socialization during childhood. The content must strengthen efforts to provide parents with the knowledge and skills to create an enabling family environment for child care, in which there is no discrimination on the basis of gender. The responsibilities and involvement of fathers and males in child care requires even greater attention than already has been given in country programmes. In basic education programmes, the growing recognition of the need for life-skills education for both school-based and out-of-school adolescents calls for innovative responses. The integration of components on

mutual respect of rights, gender equality and non-violent behaviours in the entire range of learning situations for boys and girls will be fundamental to responsible life decisions within the context of the development of children and protection of their rights. In the area of adolescent development, actions need to provide new opportunities for preparing girls to defend and realize their rights. Advocacy tools and programme interventions require promotion of the rights of adolescents to information, motivating their participation and supporting their efforts to be change agents to address responsibly such issues as early marriage, female genital mutilation, exploitation, HIV/AIDS and gender-based violence.

27. The United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and the Common Country Assessment provide the opportunity to reinforce and support the mainstreaming of gender and follow-up to the global conferences. The initial success of the United Nations theme groups on gender in, *inter alia*, Malawi, Mongolia, Mozambique, Myanmar and the Philippines, indicates that UNICEF capacity-building efforts in these countries have assisted in the mainstreaming of gender in the UNDAF process. At the global level, UNICEF, as the current co-chair of the United Nations Development Group subgroup on gender, is in a position to contribute to and influence the process of technical support and programme guidance for effective integration of gender issues.

## B. Strengthening capacity and impact

28. The UNDAF process and other inter-agency initiatives promoted by the Inter-agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality will guide the development of indicators for planning and assessing gender in the country programme. The UNICEF programmer's handbook contains the basic information in this regard, which will be tested in selected country programmes. During 1999, a framework for the evaluation of UNICEF efforts in mainstreaming gender will be developed and tested for conduct of gender impact studies, based on regional trends and experiences in monitoring the situation of children and women, the gender audits conducted in the West Bank and Gaza and the Sudan and mid-term reviews and country evaluations in Burkina Faso and other countries.

29. The implications of globalization, the HIV/AIDS pandemic and increasing situations of crisis and instability on the lives of women and children are enormous. Country-specific strategies and tools are being developed in collaboration with regional partners, the Joint and Co-sponsored United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, inter-agency bodies in the United Nations system and the international financial institutions. The report on ensuring children's rights in Africa that is before the Executive Board at the 1999 annual session (E/ICEF/1999/12) discusses the gender aspects of meeting these challenges in Africa.

30. Resources for gender mainstreaming are included in country programme management plans. Supplementary funds have supported such special initiatives as girls' education, ending female genital mutilation and violence against women and girls, and adolescent development in the promotion of women's and girls' rights. Resource mobilization in national budgets and international cooperation will be crucial for sustaining and expanding these efforts in realizing the goals of the World Summit for Children, the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the goals of other global conferences.

31. The most important challenge is to ensure that the international human rights instruments are effective in making a difference in the lives of women and children. In this process, the gender focal points are catalysts, advocates and change agents and constitute the core resource of UNICEF in its efforts to mainstream gender. Except in a few large country programmes, these focal points have other main responsibilities, which sometimes can adversely affect their support to gender mainstreaming throughout the country programme. At the same time, in the context of continued demands arising from the gender- and rights-based approaches, there will be a need for capacity-building and tools for ensuring competence, compliance and commitment of all UNICEF staff to gender goals and the Economic and Social Council's agreed conclusions on gender. Institutional mechanisms will need to be strengthened to sustain, expand and monitor the gains achieved in mainstreaming gender to promote the equal rights of girls and women.

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*For action*

## Progress, challenges and future strategies in basic education

*Summary*

The Executive Board last reviewed a report on UNICEF strategies in basic education at its 1995 session (E/ICEF/1995/16), five years after the convening of the World Conference on Education For All held at Jomtien, Thailand.

The present document reports on progress to date in achieving universal basic education, as well as on the challenges and future strategies in basic education. Following a brief overview in chapter I, chapter II reviews the situation at the end of the decade. Chapter III presents the evolution of UNICEF education activities since mid-decade, and chapter IV focuses on the challenges faced in meeting the decade goals. The strategies for meeting the future goals in education are detailed in chapter V. A draft recommendation for Executive Board approval is contained in chapter VI.

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# I. Background and overview

## A. Revisiting the World Declaration on Education For All

> "Every person — child, youth, adult — shall be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs. These needs comprise both essential learning tools (such as literacy, oral expression, numeracy, and problem solving) and the basic learning content (such as knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes) required by human beings to be able to survive, to develop their full capacities, to live and work in dignity, to participate fully in development, to improve the quality of their lives, to make informed decisions, and to continue learning." (World Declaration on Education For All, Article I).

1. In 1990, some 1,500 participants from 155 nations and dozens of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and development agencies met in Jomtien, Thailand, to adopt the World Declaration on Education For All (EFA). This Declaration and its Framework for Action were remarkably insightful documents; they analysed the challenges and opportunities facing the last decade of the twentieth century and proposed that countries set targets for the year 2000 based on an "expanded" vision of universal basic education. These were: (a) expansion of early childhood care and development (ECCD) activities; (b) universal access to, and completion of, primary education; (c) improvement in learning achievement; (d) reduction of the adult illiteracy rate to one half of its 1990 level; (e) expansion in basic education and training in other essential skills required by youth and adults; and (f) increased acquisition of the knowledge, skills and values required for better living and sustainable development (World Conference on Education For All, Framework for Action, 1990).

2. UNICEF, both in preparation for the World Summit for Children, which followed the World Conference on EFA, and in subsequent programming during the first half of the decade, placed greatest emphasis on enrolment in, and completion of, primary schooling. Now, as the end of the decade approaches, the EFA Declaration is being revisited by many of its original sponsors, including UNICEF. As a result, a renewed commitment, reflected in the UNICEF agenda for children beyond 2000, is being made to the broader vision of basic education which the Declaration so eloquently proposes.

## B. Programming in the context of the Convention on the Rights of the Child

> "1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall, in particular:
>
> (a) Make primary education compulsory and available free to all; ..." (Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 28).
>
> "1. States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to:
>
> (a) The development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential; ..." (Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 29).

3. For UNICEF, a special incentive in revisiting the EFA Declaration is the imperative imposed upon the world by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The general principles and articles of the Convention insist on primary education for all, characterized by non-discrimination and the pursuit of the best interests of the child. Based on almost universal ratification of the Convention and the resulting consensus that every child, regardless of resources and circumstances, has the right to a basic education of high quality, UNICEF is now working to ensure that the education programmes it supports are developed from a rights perspective.

# II. The situation at decade's end

## A. The Education For All 2000 Assessment

4. The EFA Framework for Action provides for an end-of-decade assessment of progress. The EFA Forum Secretariat, based at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), is coordinating this assessment, with technical input from a Technical Advisory Group consisting of representatives of the five partner agencies (UNESCO, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund, UNICEF and the World Bank). The assessment is now well under way, with strong UNICEF support; many countries are already working on reports, and 11 Regional Technical Advisory Groups have been established. While the world as a whole has made some progress in achieving the Jomtien vision — and some countries quite remarkable success — the general trends have been disappointing.

### 1. Early childhood care for survival, growth and development

5. The decade has seen a slight growth in formal pre-school enrolments. More significant is the expansion of structured but less formal learning opportunities for young children through home- and community-based programmes and parental education. However, very few countries have access to good data on such programmes, and official data are usually limited to formal pre-schools.

### 2. Getting children into school and keeping them there

6. The number of children of school-age enrolled in school has increased both globally and for every region in the developing world. But the global goal of EFA by the year 2000 will not be achieved — between 130 million and 150 million children of school-age, two thirds of them girls, are not in school. The growth in enrolment in some regions has barely kept pace with population growth, and some countries show an actual decline in enrolment rates.

7. Despite the commitment made at Jomtien to ensure quality basic education, the focus of most developing countries over the decade has been on increasing access. Partly as a result of that, an alarming proportion of children does not complete even the first four years of school. The regional rates of survival to grade five range from 90 per cent in Latin America, the Caribbean and the Middle East and North Africa, to 67 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa, and 59 per cent in South Asia. There are now more than 150 million children, including adolescents, who have entered school but have dropped out before acquiring literacy and numeracy.

### 3. The quality of learning

8. Because of the commitment made at Jomtien to define learning outcomes and improve the measurement of learning achievement, some significant progress has been made in this area. The Monitoring Learning Achievement (MLA) programme, a joint UNESCO/UNICEF activity, has helped 40 countries set goals for learning and improve their capacity to measure and monitor progress. Unfortunately, many of the studies undertaken show low levels of achievement.

### 4. Paying for education

9. While the world more than doubled its education expenditure per person between 1980 and 1995, expenditure in the least developed countries fluctuated at around $9 per person, while that for developing countries overall rose from $31 to $45. In industrialized countries, the figure more than doubled, from $487 to $1,211. In a decade that has witnessed a substantial decline in official development assistance, deepening poverty and reduced government resources for education have increased the financial burden on many communities and households for education.

## B. Major actors and resources in basic education

10. The EFA conference witnessed an unprecedented level of collaboration between the major multilateral and bilateral development agencies and international NGOs. The Consultative Forum on EFA has helped to mobilize continued commitment to EFA and is playing a key role by leading the EFA 2000 Assessment. UNESCO, with which UNICEF, in February 1999, signed a memorandum of understanding outlining areas of common interest and future collaboration, provides leadership in a wide range of education issues, from pre-school to tertiary education. The World Bank has expanded substantially its involvement in education over the decade, and regional development banks are showing increased interest in this sector. UNICEF, which supports education in over 140 countries, continues to be one of the key agencies financing programmes at the country level. The decade has also witnessed new partnerships at the regional level, with the Association for the Development of Education in Africa encouraging collaboration between government ministries and development agencies.

11. New forms of collaboration have developed around the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa, especially for low enrolment countries. Sector-wide approaches are also being tried as countries and agencies begin to apply to education the lessons learned in health. In the best of cases, these mechanisms lead to greater donor collaboration, strong government ownership of the reform process, and more effective and efficient investments. The United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) presents another opportunity for coordinated work in assessing, planning and implementing reform programmes.

12. Of particular importance has been the larger role that families, communities, local governments and NGOs are playing in education. Through decentralization, more authority for providing education is often being devolved to local actors. This should not absolve national Governments from their primary responsibility in this regard, but rather build important linkages between schools and communities and supplement national resources with local support.

### C. New developments: what the World Conference on Education For All did not anticipate

13. However prescient the EFA Declaration might have been, it could not anticipate the magnitude of the impact two trends would have on the education of children: (a) the growing risks to child survival and development from abuse and neglect, exploitation and conflict, disease and environmental degradation, as well as from the ravages wrought by HIV/AIDS; and (b) the effects on disparity of such trends as globalization, privatization and, in some cases, decentralization. Nor did the Declaration adequately recognize the growing evidence of the critical importance of both good care in the early years of a child's life and close links across health, hygiene, nutrition and education. Most significantly, perhaps, it did not consider the fundamental concept of child rights as the underlying principle of education for all.

14. Many of those "missing" pieces have become the focus of recent education programming in UNICEF and in preparations for the new decade.

## III. The evolution of UNICEF education activities since mid-decade

15. In 1995, the UNICEF Executive Board adopted a basic education strategy (see E/ICEF/1995/16 and E/ICEF/1995/9/Rev.1, decision 1995/21) which called for the following emphases in UNICEF assistance in education: (a) targeting major system problems such as access, equity and efficiency; (b) improving learning processes and outcomes; (c) developing a systemic and systematic approach to the long-term development and sustainability of education systems; (d) promoting cost-effective systemic reforms targeted at universal education; (e) making effective use of new technologies for disseminating information and strengthening the process of education; (f) ensuring that education plays an important role in re-establishing normalcy in emergency situations; and (g) being concerned with the years beyond primary education.

16. In several key areas for UNICEF, important lessons have been learned since mid-decade which have helped to reinforce and sharpen this strategy. Key elements which have helped in this process were documents prepared for the drafting of the new Global Agenda for Children; the Ninth Innocenti Global Seminar; and *The State of the World's Children 1999* report, which was devoted to education. The lessons learned and adjustments made include the following:

(a) Programming within a rights perspective must lead to a greater effort to ensure that all children are able to exercise their right to a quality basic education. This requires more explicit attempts to find children not in school and get them enrolled;

(b) Among the unreached, girls must continue to be the highest priority. More evidence is proving the value of education for girls, and more experience is showing that focused interventions can make a difference in educational access and quality for girls — and, therefore, for boys as well;

(c) Education can play an important role in helping children in need of special protection, particularly working children and children affected by HIV/AIDS;

(d) Education can also play a major role in situations of instability and conflict, both restoring the essential conditions for learning and providing children with at least one stable, safe and supportive environment;

(e) Building more schools does not necessarily lead to higher enrolment. There are many reasons for not attending school — and many ways to provide a basic education. How "ready" and welcoming schools are to children and how well they reach out to families and communities are important issues to consider in expanding basic education;

(f) The essential core of a good basic education must include, but go beyond, literacy and numeracy. Helping children and youth acquire skills, values and attitudes critical to their future is an essential task for UNICEF. Ensuring that these are successfully transmitted in classrooms requires working with Governments and communities to support both the ongoing renewal and more consistent implementation of basic curricula and teacher development programmes focused on more active learning methodologies;

(g) Data reported from the national level alone can no longer be used to describe the situation of education, but rather must be disaggregated by region, gender and administrative level — and include information on costs — so that evidence of disparities, and their major causes, can be more clearly revealed;

(h) Education systems, educators and development agencies can no longer view classrooms and children in isolation from the wider context in which they exist. The nature of early childhood care and of children's health and nutrition; the risks faced by children, especially during adolescence; the impact of HIV/AIDS; and ever more

frequent conditions of instability — all of these require more attention from educators and education systems;

(i) Africa has been and must remain a regional priority for education, although this cannot be the only area where special efforts are exerted. The Low Enrolment Countries programme, a partnership with the World Bank and UNESCO, through the Special Initiative on Africa and the African Girls' Education Initiative, have particular potential for UNICEF work in Africa.

# IV. Challenges in meeting the decade goals

17. The programming priorities for 1998–2000 are important means to accelerate progress towards the World Summit for Children and EFA goals. They also reconfirm the return of UNICEF to the broader definition of basic education reflected in the EFA Declaration, a return even more marked in the Global Agenda for the new century. Whereas the World Summit adopted only an enrolment goal which partially addressed completion, the programme priorities are focused on four areas critical to EFA: early childhood care; primary school enrolment; quality; and girls' education.

## A. Early childhood care for survival, growth and development

18. Some 22 countries are attempting to accelerate progress towards the World Summit for Children goal of expanding ECCD activities. The reconceptualization by UNICEF of this area as "early childhood care for survival, growth and development", emphasizing comprehensive, family-focused and community–based programming, and its priority place in the Global Agenda, are now refocusing attention on this critical age.

19. Activities to meet 1998–2000 priorities include the piloting of integrated child-care programmes, more comprehensive national policies for young children, home- and community-based child care and development programmes, parent education projects (with an emphasis on cognitive and psychosocial stimulation), and greater collaboration with NGOs in the provision of child care.

## B. Enrolment

20. Over 20 countries are committed to intensifying efforts towards meeting the World Summit for Children enrolment goal. The challenge is to increase both the supply of, and the demand for, education — as much as possible by 2000, but at least as a more solid basis for greater achievements in the future. Strategies being put in place by UNICEF in support of these efforts include:

(a) Pursuing more systematic sectoral planning, where possible with other donors, and advocating for more resources for basic education;

(b) Assisting Governments to gather more accurate and timely data for the year 2000 EFA assessment, at both community and national levels;

(c) Promoting processes of decentralization by strengthening school management and enhancing the role of school-community organizations;

(d) In a few cases, providing greater access to education services, including schools, furniture, teacher training and textbooks;

(e) Supporting projects that help to increase both demand and supply, e.g., mother-tongue education, multi-grade teaching, school clusters, mobile schools and distance education centres, school hygiene and sanitation, and school- and community-based mechanisms to get more children into school.

## C. Quality

21. Over 35 countries are committed to raising the quality of basic education by the year 2000. A major challenge is to shift UNICEF programming from top-down approaches to more innovative ways of ensuring that quality improvement is based firmly in individual schools and supported locally as well as by national education systems. Other challenges are to continue investing in two critical areas of quality improvement: the professional development of teachers; and the renewal and implementation of a core curriculum with clearly stated outcomes and usable tools for measuring achievement.

22. In several countries, UNICEF is helping to develop school self-assessment checklists on quality, safety and child-friendliness, and to strengthen parent and community involvement in school management and oversight; participating in the MLA project; and promoting more active learning methods and life skills curricula.

### D. Girls' education

23. Because it is so critical to achieving EFA, some 33 countries have singled out girls' education as a 1998–2000 programme priority. The challenges of accelerating progress in this area are many. Meeting them requires policy reforms; social mobilization; analyses of the gender-sensitivity of classrooms, communities and education systems; and concrete actions designed to bring more girls into school and keep them there.

24. UNICEF is supporting countries to implement a wide range of activities, including social mobilization through local language radio broadcasts, sanitary latrines for girls, gender training for staff and gender analyses of textbooks, mobile training for hard-to-reach female teachers, day-care centres for the younger siblings of girls, the provision of single-sex schools and girls' hostels in boarding schools, and community-wide support systems covering female literacy programmes and income-generating activities.

## V. Challenges of the new century: strategies for the future

### A. A vision for education in the twenty-first century

> "UNICEF's work, and the work of our collaborators in the next decade, must make basic education, of decent quality, available to all children ... the time has come to guarantee that the substance of that education is of such quality that every child will want to stay in school and every parent will want to have his or her children in school." ("The Focus of UNICEF's Work Beyond 2000", CF/EXD/IC/1999–02, 12 February 1999).

25. Following a review of the 1995 education strategy, and taking into account the evolving global context and the ever-larger network of actors in this field, UNICEF is attempting to reorient and refocus its work in education. Based on the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the EFA Declaration's expanded definition of basic education, UNICEF commits itself to the following vision:

> All children will be able to fulfil their right to education, meet their basic learning needs, realize their full potential and participate meaningfully in society. This will be achieved through access to high-quality, child-friendly learning environments; comprehensive early childhood care; quality primary schools and equivalent education programmes; expanded opportunities for adolescent education, participation and development; and families and communities that support children to acquire a quality basic education.

26. In order to approach this vision, in partnership with Governments, other United Nations and bilateral agencies, NGOs and civil society, and in recognition of UNICEF resources, experience and comparative advantage, UNICEF will pursue the strategies and areas of action detailed below.

#### 1. Early childhood care for survival, growth and development: getting young children ready for school and for life

27. UNICEF is committed to helping ensure a strong cognitive and psychosocial component in good quality, comprehensive care for young children.

28. Learning begins at birth, and parents and other caregivers are the first teachers of their children. Strategies for helping young children need to be more integrated and comprehensive in nature, including perspectives from education, nutrition, hygiene and health. They must be centred on the child's needs, focused on strengthening the family's caring abilities and firmly based in the resources of the community. They must also help children to be better prepared and more "ready" for school, while helping schools to be more "ready" for young children. Strategies for the UNICEF education sector with regard to early childhood care include:

(a) Identifying the essential psychosocial components, messages, indicators and assessment tools for early childhood care programmes (e.g., in parent and caregiver education programmes and child-care activities);

(b) Building the capacity of UNICEF staff and counterparts to include these components in programming for early childhood care;

(c) Assisting Governments to develop more integrated and comprehensive policies supportive of the young child, especially with regard to their cognitive and psychosocial development;

(d) Ensuring that the first years of primary education are friendly and welcoming to young children.

#### 2. Equity of access and completion: getting all children into school and keeping them there

29. UNICEF is committed to promoting equity of access to, and completion of, quality basic education for all

children, especially for girls and for others living in conditions of disparity, discrimination and exclusion.

30. The State, in collaboration with its partners, has the responsibility to ensure that all children (aged 0–18 years) have the opportunity to acquire quality basic education as a foundation for lifelong learning and active participation in society. This includes, but is not limited to, schools. It is essential to take deliberate, targeted action to address the conditions that cause disparity and exclusion, and to find excluded children and get them into school. As outlined in the medium-term plan (MTP) for 1998-2001 (E/ICEF/1998/13 and Corr.1), UNICEF will support basic strategies in this area which include:

(a) Promoting policy dialogue on the need to reach the unreached and to understand the conditions that contribute to their exclusion (e.g., developing more unified systems of diversified, flexible approaches to basic education);

(b) Mapping and identifying the excluded, i.e. helping Governments and communities to develop school- and community-based mechanisms to trace and track children not in school;

(c) Including the excluded, i.e. developing specific approaches, such as multi-grade classes and more child-centred learning, to get more children into school and keep them there.

31. As confirmed in the MTP, UNICEF will continue to focus on girls' education by promoting multi-country programmes that put in place interventions known to work. High priority will also be placed on working children (through a global programme on education as a preventative strategy for child labour) and children affected by conflict and HIV/AIDS, with further attention being given to children facing particularly daunting obstacles to education (e.g., children with disabilities, nomads).

### 3. Increased quality: ensuring children learn what they need to learn

32. UNICEF is committed to ensuring access to basic education of good quality — where children can acquire the essential learning tools needed to gain the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes critical to their own lives, the well-being of their families and their constructive participation in society.

33. Quality basic education, based on the EFA Declaration and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, is education that successfully transmits literacy, numeracy and life skills. It includes a child's physical, cognitive, social, emotional and spiritual development; addresses each child's unique capacities; encourages active participation in learning; and ensures adequate and equitable learning resources according to national standards for content and performance. Strategies and activities to be pursued include:

(a) Supporting curriculum renewal and implementation, emphasizing literacy, numeracy and life skills;

(b) Developing and disseminating more active, child-centred teaching-learning methodologies, especially those which address the situations of children living under conditions of discrimination and disadvantage (e.g., children in conflict, children affected by HIV/AIDS);

(c) Developing tools for assessing literacy, numeracy and life skills, including for out-of-school children;

(d) Expanding and enriching learning through the media and the use of new communication technologies, especially in support of reducing disparities in educational access and quality.

### 4. Adolescent education, participation and development: helping adolescents get educated and involved

34. UNICEF is committed to promoting expanded opportunities for adolescents to: (a) acquire basic education where they have not received it; (b) continue to learn, with attention to life skills and preparation for adults roles; and (c) participate in society and contribute to its development.

35. Adolescence will be one of the key areas in UNICEF programming and advocacy in the new decade. Dealing with adolescents is pivotal for addressing other major UNICEF concerns. Adolescence is also a critical stage of a child's development. At a global level, the failings of primary education, as well as of other social services, leave millions of adolescents, particularly girls, without literacy, numeracy or technical skills, unprepared for adult roles, and facing many new violations of their rights and risks to their well-being, of which HIV/AIDS is one of the most critical.

36. UNICEF and its partners have already done considerable work on adolescent health issues. Further work is now needed to ensure that adolescents achieve basic education and to expand their opportunities to participate effectively in society and to promote their rights. This will include:

(a) Promoting dialogue on the importance of providing basic education for out-of-school youth, with a

special focus on girls (e.g., policies to allow easier reintegration into the school system);

(b) Developing projects in "second-chance" basic education and life skills education for youth;

(c) Through the Education for Development programme and Voices of Youth, promoting wider awareness among adolescents of global issues of development and justice within the education sector, media and civil society;

(d) Helping adolescents bring together the experience of both North and South in issues of mutual concern (e.g., child rights, intolerance and racism, conflict and rapid change, environmental degradation, alienation and apathy).

### 5. Planning, financing and managing education: empowering families and communities

37. UNICEF is committed to enabling families and communities to help fulfil the right of children to education through greater participation in planning and managing educational programmes.

38. Ensuring greater progress towards EFA requires an increase in the resources available to basic education. The 20/20 Initiative offers the potential to increase support for education from both national and international resources and to adjust budget allocations to reflect priorities for basic education and the unreached. The trend towards government-led sectoral development plans should lead to more effective resource mobilization, as should the increasing interest in private sector partnerships and in more effective and speedier debt relief targeting resources for social development programmes.

39. The trend towards decentralization has had mixed results for children. In some contexts it has led to increased community support for education, more equitable access and improvements in quality. In others, it has both placed a greater burden on the poorest households and increased administrative responsibilities without enhancing administrative capacity. Along with the mobilization of more resources for education must come a commitment to ensuring that parents and communities play a greater role as genuine partners in managing basic education. Strategies to be adopted by UNICEF in this area include:

(a) Building management capacities at all levels, especially in the context of decentralization (e.g., strengthening parent-teacher associations);

(b) Assisting the State to mobilize, allocate and manage resources for learning in an equitable and effective manner.

### 6. HIV/AIDS prevention and control

40. UNICEF is committed to increasing the impact of education on HIV prevention and reducing the impact of HIV/AIDS on education systems and outcomes.

41. More evidence is accumulating on the effectiveness of well-designed and well-implemented life skills programmes focused on HIV/AIDS prevention. Tragically, more evidence is also available which shows the terrible impact of HIV/AIDS on education — on schools and classrooms, on teachers and on students. Informed by the activities of other sectors of UNICEF and other partners, education strategies in this area will include:

(a) Expanding and improving the quality of HIV/AIDS education in the context of life skills programmes;

(b) Helping countries and communities to assess and develop ways to combat the impact of HIV/AIDS on education systems, school provision and quality, and children's learning.

### 7. Programming in unstable environments

42. UNICEF is committed to providing a more effective educational response to situations of instability and emergency.

43. The increase in the number of children and systems affected by instability poses additional challenges for programming in the next decade. While a focus on rights has forced greater recognition of the moral obligation to meet the basic learning needs of such children, experience has also shown the benefits of restoring normalcy and stability through early attention to education. Previously, programmes focused on the delivery of supplies, often in the form of kits. Now more comprehensive approaches are being adopted which involve working with communities and local authorities to rebuild (or even transform) the system, provide a wide range of support to teachers and adapt the curriculum to the changing needs of the students.

44. UNICEF has been working to incorporate the capacity to respond to emergencies and instability into every country programming process. In the case of education, this means:

(a) Establishing UNICEF capacity at the regional level to play a leading role in early and rapid education assessments;

(b) Developing a range of responses that go beyond a reflex response of providing educational supplies towards a more integrated programme of support for the rehabilitation of education systems;

(c) Improving partnerships with other United Nations agencies to ensure the rapid and effective mobilization and deployment of resources for education.

### 8. Promoting child-friendly learning environments

45. UNICEF is committed to promoting the establishment of rights-based, child-friendly education systems and, within them, child-friendly schools and other learning environments, especially for excluded groups (e.g., girls, children with disabilities, children affected by HIV/AIDS).

46. Encompassing and summarizing the elements discussed above — of equity and quality, protection and community involvement — is the concept of a rights-based school. Taken together, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the EFA Declaration not only demand basic education for all, they powerfully describe how that education should look. A rights-based school — which ensures that children can realize their rights both in and out of school — can also be seen as a "child-friendly" school. Such a school is healthy and health-promoting, gender-sensitive and academically effective, and both enhances enrolment, completion and learning achievement and helps protect children. Trying to create and sustain such a school can be a strong incentive for a community to support basic education for its children.

47. As mentioned in the MTP, a major objective of UNICEF is to promote the development of child-friendly education systems and, within them, child-friendly schools and other learning environments (e.g., ECCD programmes, complementary basic education programmes). Such a school would:

(a) Reflect and realize the rights of every child: promote and monitor the well-being and rights of all children; and defend and protect all children from abuse and harm, both inside and outside of school);

(b) Understand the whole child, in a broad context: be concerned with what happens to children before they enter the system and once they have left the classroom, i.e. back in their homes, the community and the workplace);

(c) Be child-centred: encourage participation, creativity and self-esteem; promote a structured, child-centred curriculum and teaching-learning methods; and consider the needs of children over the needs of the others;

(d) Be gender-sensitive and girl-friendly: promote parity of girls and boys; eliminate gender stereotypes; and provide facilities, curricula and learning processes welcoming to girls;

(e) Promote quality learning outcomes: encourage children to think critically, solve problems, express opinions and learn how to learn; and help children master reading, writing and calculating and the knowledge and skills required for life in the new century;

(f) Provide education based on the reality of children's lives: ensure that curricula respond to the learning needs of individual children as well as to the general objectives of the education system and the local environment and traditional knowledge of the community;

(g) Be flexible, respond to diversity and act to ensure inclusion and equality of opportunity: meet differing circumstances and needs of children (e.g., gender, culture, social class, ability level); and not stereotype, exclude or discriminate on the basis of difference;

(h) Promote mental and physical health: encourage healthy practices and guarantee sanitary facilities and a safe and joyful environment;

(i) Provide education that is affordable and accessible, especially to families most at-risk through conflict, poverty and other forms of exclusion;

(j) Enhance teacher capacity, morale and commitment: ensure that teachers have sufficient pre-service training, in-service professional development, status and income;

(k) Be family-focused: attempt to strengthen families and help children, parents and teachers establish harmonious, collaborative partnerships;

(l) Be community-based: encourage parents, local government and community organizations to help manage and finance education; and promote partnerships and networks focused on child rights.

48. In order to promote such schools, UNICEF will: (a) refine and disseminate the framework of child-friendly schools, including the development of clear indicators of child-friendly elements; and (b) help to implement child-friendly systems and schools in selected countries, especially through work at school and community levels.

## B. External cooperation and partnerships

49. Implementation of these strategies not only demands more intersectoral collaboration within UNICEF in areas of health, nutrition, water and sanitation, child protection, and gender and participation, but also stronger partnerships with other organizations. Links with UNESCO and the World Bank are most obvious and are being strengthened at global, regional and national levels through the EFA assessment and in thematic areas such as early childhood care. UNICEF, for example, has had major input in designing World Bank projects in early childhood care in Indonesia and the Philippines.

50. New partners will also be needed in implementing new strategies. Closer links are required with the World Health Organization and the Save the Children Alliance, both experienced in various aspects of child-friendly schools; with the Joint and Co-sponsored United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS in the links between HIV/AIDS and education; and with a wide range of development agencies, NGOs, and private sector organizations involved in learning assessment, adolescence and the use of technology to reduce educational disparities. The UNDAF mechanism should permit even stronger partnerships in the implementation of the strategies outlined above.

## C. UNICEF comparative advantages and specific contributions

51. UNICEF has several comparative advantages in carrying out the above strategies in support of realizing the right of all children to a basic education of good quality. These include:

(a) Its organizational mandate and commitment to the rights and well-being of children;

(b) A broad knowledge of, and practical experience with, families, communities, schools and education systems around the world — experience grounded both in policy dialogue and in the field;

(c) A holistic view of children, an expanded vision of education and the value of integrated and multisectoral approaches to learning. A new Programme Division Task Force on Basic Education, with members from several UNICEF sectors, will focus on the comprehensive needs of children;

(d) Awareness of the fact that quality is at the centre of education and that improving the quality of what goes on in a classroom requires sustained commitment and the genuine internalization of innovations in the minds and actions of decision makers and programme implementers;

(e) Awareness that diversity, not standard solutions, must be the norm — that generic models of good education, to be sustainable, must be adapted to local conditions and needs;

(f) Acceptance of the premise that partnerships and networks are needed at all levels of the system — at the community level, but also among the major sectoral and political forces of society;

(g) A strong belief that mobilization and advocacy, at all levels, are essential for development.

# VI. Draft recommendation

52. The Executive Director *recommends* that the Executive Board adopt the following draft decision:

*The Executive Board,*

*Having reviewed* the report on "Progress, challenges and strategies in basic education" (E/ICEF/1999/14),

*Understanding* the refinement and further articulation of the "UNICEF strategies in basic education" (E/ICEF/1995/16), adopted by the Executive Board in 1995 (E/ICEF/1995/9/Rev.1, decision 1995/21), given the new global and local contexts for children,

*Appreciating* UNICEF initiatives in assisting countries to achieve the goals for children in the 1990s,

1. *Endorses* the framework proposed for the future work of UNICEF in education, including the vision and strategies set forth in document E/ICEF/1999/14;

2. *Encourages* UNICEF to strengthen its work in helping to:

(a) Ensure strong psychosocial and cognitive elements in comprehensive early childhood care, especially for vulnerable children;

(b) Provide all children — girls and boys — equal opportunities for gaining access to and completing basic education of good quality, especially for groups living in conditions of disparity, discrimination and exclusion (including working children and children affected by conflict and HIV/AIDS);

(c) Expand opportunities for basic education and participation among adolescents at greatest disadvantage and risk;

(d) Strengthen the ability of families and communities to support their children's right to basic education;

3. *Affirms* the need for a stronger role for education in unstable environments and in combating child labour and HIV/AIDS.